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FILM and the FUTURE

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Introduction

by
William C. Wees
President,
Film Studies Association of Canada

The context for the first presentation of these essays was a conference on "Film and the Future" organized by the Film Studies Association of Canada and held at the University of British Columbia in June, 1982. Several of the papers presented at that conference have been published elsewhere, and most of those included here are revised versions of the original presentations; one, in fact, is totally new: Carol Rutter's essay on* ***Hill Street Blues*** *(her conference paper having already appeared in* ***Cinema Canada****). Thus the present collection reflects the concerns of the conference, but is not intended to be a record of it.*

Only a few of the essays offer specific conjectures about the future, but all were written with some particular aspect of the conference's general theme in mind. Thus the study of Allan Kroeker's films by Hildegard Froese Tiessen and Paul Tiessen explores the work of a filmmaker who exemplifies the future of regional filmmaking, as discussed by Gene Walz. Walz's apprehensions about the future of filmmaking in Manitoba complement Réal La Rochelle's analysis of the very uncertain future of independent, socially conscious cinema in Québec. Both Walz and La Rochelle discuss the effects of governmental policies and funding (or the lack thereof) on the future of filmmaking in their respective regions of Canada.

Bill Nichols pays little attention to film ***per se****, but by focussing on the study of "visual languages," he is able to show how the traditional humanistic premises of higher education are endangered by the new information technologies – or, more precisely, by the way those technologies have played into the hands of politicians, bureaucrats and administrators who want to impose models of "cost efficiency" and top-down decision-making on our educational institutions. As a university teacher, I believe Nichols' analysis to be as accurate as it is justifiably gloomy in its predictions for the future of higher education. It should be read by everyone concerned with the future of film study and higher education in general.*

Also drawing upon new technological developments – particularly the interfacing of film, video and computers – David Poole foresees significant changes in the traditional forms and functions of film itself. Carried to the extreme, these changes would mean the end of film as we have known it since its inception at the end of the 19th century. Carol Rutter, on the other hand, suggests that if ***Hill Street Blues*** *is any indication of the direction TV drama is headed, then television will be adopting more and more of the techniques traditionally associated with film.*

But the techniques traditionally associated with film are always open to re-examination and change, especially within that realm of filmmaking labeled experimental or avant-garde. The mechanical and photographic bases of cinema – which have long been taken for granted by the public and the industry that produces films to entertain the public – have never been regarded as closed questions by experimental and avant-garde filmmakers. What might be called the problematic of the photograph provides the basis for Bruce Elder's discussion of the "post-modernist" films of Vincent Grenier, Jack Chambers, Michael Snow and his own work as a filmmaker. A different treatment of the same problematic appears in Peter Harcourt's analysis of Martin Duckworth's experimental documentary, ***The Wish.*** *Even the purely mechanical process of film projection has been treated analytically and creatively by the avant-garde, and – as I show in my essay – has been made the central, shaping metaphor of Keewatin Dewdney's* ***The Maltese Cross Movement.*** *While the more radical innovations of experimental and avant-garde*

filmmakers are unlikely to be incorporated by the dominant film industry – except in watered-down and more palatable forms – it is precisely those innovations which show that film is a living, changing art form... with a future.

Probably the most rapid changes, however, have not occurred in film practice, but in film theory. One example of the new directions in film theory is Peter Baxter's analysis of masochism and the "death instinct" in the relationship of the spectator to the film spectacle. Another is represented by Paisley Livingston's critique of Metz's semiological answers to Bazin's seminal question, "Qu'est-ce que le cinéma ?" Livingston's emphasis on the social contexts of film viewing and the influence those contexts have on the "codes" of cinema, raises a number of questions about the nature of film that are only now being formulated and whose answers lie in the future of film theory.

If a single conclusion about film and its future can be drawn from the essays collected here, I think it could be summed up in Livingston's concluding remarks : "That the future of the cinema may not follow from its past, that the 'essence' of film may display radical change, means that there is no determined essence of film, no identity, no exact and conclusive answer to the question. Yet insofar as the cinema has been and continues to be determined, we must also continue to pose the question : what is cinema ?" If the future promises no definitive answer to that question, it seems certain to offer, at the very least, new contexts in which to ask it.

Montreal
May 1983

Note

* Carol Rutter's "Gearing Up for Tomorrow: New Technologies and Film Aesthetics" has been published in **Cinema Canada,** No. 89 (October 1982), pp. 22-23 ; an earlier version of Peter Harcourt's essay in this collection appeared in **Ciné-Tracts,** No. 17 (Summer, Fall 1982), pp. 33-38 ; Seth Feldman's "The Electronic Fable : Docudrama on Canadian Television" (which is not included here) is scheduled to appear in the forthcoming issue of **Canadian Drama ;** and a modified version of Paisley Livingston's essay in this collection will appear in French in the forthcoming issue of **Communication et Information.**

Contributors

Peter Baxter is assistant professor, Film Studies, Queen's University.

Bruce Elder is an experimental filmmaker and teaches at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute.

Peter Harcourt is a full professor, Film Studies, Carleton University.

Réal LaRochelle teaches cinema at the CEGEP Montmorency.

Paisley Livingston is assistant professor, department of English, McGill University.

Bill Nichols is chairman of Film Studies, Queen's University.

David Poole is the experimental film officer at the Canadian Filmmakers' Distribution Centre.

Carol A. Rutter is a student in cinema at Concordia University.

Hildegard F. Tiessen is an instructor, department of English, Wilfrid Laurier University and **Paul Gerard Tiessen** is associate professor, department of English, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Gene Walz is assistant professor and head of Film Studies at the University of Manitoba.

William C. Wees is associate professor, department of English, McGill University.

The Cinema, Memory and the Photographic Trace

by Peter Harcourt

For Martin Duckworth

... when we are nostalgic, we take pictures.

– Susan Sontag (1945)

There is a delicate form of the empirical which identifies itself so intimately with its object that it thereby becomes theory.

– Goethe (in John Berger, 1980)

In 1970, working at the National Film Board, Martin Duckworth completed a short film that, on the level of intention, might have been just a home movie. On the level of achievement, however, **The Wish** is really something else. Through the intricacy of its structure, the circularity of its form, and the originality of its syntax, the film becomes a disquisition on time, on memory, and on the relationship of the past to the present, of continuity to rupture, of the personal to the historical, and of the morality of emotional involvement versus aesthetic detachment. The film invokes feelings both of desire and guilt, of presence and absence, of life and death. By intercutting direct cinema footage with stills from the past, the film achieves a dialectic between the sense of how-it-is-happening-now and of how-it-was-then.

"... art mediates between what is given and what is desired." (Berger, p. 158). **The Wish** takes as its "given" a visit of Duckworth's own twin daughters, Sylvia and Marion, aged about eight, to his parents' summer home in the Eastern Townships. Through its actuality footage, the film captures what appears to be a series of unrehearsed events : the girls play on the veranda, they help to clean the house, they go fishing with their grandfather, they all have a picnic lunch in a graveyard. On this level, **The Wish** is very much an observational film. However, whether by accident or design, Duckworth disturbs the apparent transparency of his own documentary practice by systematically employing a disruptive syntactical device : whenever one of the twins breaks with the agreed fiction that she is not being filmed and looks at the camera (which is, of course, at her father), Duckworth freezes the frame and cuts away to a series of stills derived from the past. Observation of the living moment is thus disturbed by its contiguous relationship to that which is past. The living moment is suspended as memory intervenes. As Sontag has written about **Menschen am Sonntag :** "The photographs shock, in the flow of the movie-transmutting, in an instant, present into past, life into death." (p. 70). They also create desire for what is no longer there.

> *It is the double-sided nature of the concept of representation – the fact that the* **presence** *of the original is suggested by an artistic representation even while its* **absence** *is demanded – that explains the pecular course of desire a representational image – or any other form of representation – evokes. This desire projects itself towards the Other the image represents. It is this that makes the desire impossible to sate, for nothing can retain its Otherness when it is actually present ; inherent in the very concept of Otherness is the idea of absence.* **(Elder,** *1982, p. 21).*

Hence, a filmic record of reality is ideal for someone who wants less to analyse its meaning than to preserve its mystery. It is equally ideal for someone who wishes more to observe a series of events than (at any rate, at the moment of their occurrence) to get involved with them. "The person who intervenes cannot record; the person who is recording cannot intervene." (Sontag, p. 12). To film an unstaged event is to establish a distance from it – paradoxically with a medium that seems to bring us closer to the surfaces of reality than any other form of the representational arts. The technology of the medium is never totally absent from the viewer's consciousness. Only the most unsophisticated of **lumpen** spectators would assume that this closeness to surfaces that we can experience with film eliminates the established distance from which the filmic act began.

In **The Wish,** we have both a narrative complexity and a theoretical one as well : the mother is wished for by the children and desired by the film. Has she gone away or is she dead ? The verbal expression of the children's desire is too private to be more than whispered. It is virtually too private to be shared with the audience, with the intended recipients of the film. Furthermore, the moment of wishing that both opens and closes the film is itself idealized

by the selective focus detectable within the image, by the sun on the water sparkling in the background and by the distance established in our minds through the knowledge that the lens is in its telephoto position and, finally, by the cutaway to Duckworth and his crew in the distance – a cutaway that we later realize is diegetically dislocated.

The film begins with its ending and ends with its beginning – but we cannot know that until we get to the end. The film ends with the twins' arrival, thus leaving us with the suggestion that the **real** experience of the visit is yet to take place. Hence the nostalgia, endemic to memory – indeed, to the very essence of photography – is challenged by this final sense we get that what we have witnessed is not what took place. We have watched a construct. Reality, in the brute sense, is yet to be undergone. And for all the detail of documentation, both filmic and photographic, that we have observed in the film, the absent one, the desired one – the wife and mother – is only present in the film in the form of a photographic trace, the presence of which confirms her absence and preserves her mystery.

> *The sense of the unattainable that can be evoked by photographs feeds directly into the erotic feelings of those for whom desirability is enhanced by distance. The lover's photograph hidden in a married woman's wallet, the poster photograph of a rock star up over an adolescent's bed, the campaign-button image of a politician's face pinned on a voter's coat, the snap-shots of a cabdriver's children clipped to the visor – all such talismatic uses of photography express a feeling both sentimental and implicity magical ; they are attempts to contact or lay claim to another reality. (***Sontag,** *p. 16).*

Towards the end of **The Wish,** as the colour bleeds out from a freeze-frame to become a still of the two children and their grandparents standing by a tombstone, and after the final expression of the wish, once again whispered, when the colour bleeds in on a still to become the scene of the twins' arrival, the effect does seem "magical." This cinematic magic, however, has been designed to signal a key sequence within the film and is very much the result of the film's technical polish, of its emotional sensitivity, and of the authority of its form.

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By way of more detailed analysis, one might offer three structuring principles that inform **The Wish :**

1. First of all, there is the gaze – the gaze both of the twins as they look directly at us and of the photographs that these frozen moments in time introduce. Being lodged within a narrative, these family photographs are rescued from what Barthes has called "the vast disorder of objects." (Barthes, 1981, p. 6). While they are obviously "an emanation of the referent" (Barthes, p. 80), these photographs refer collectively to both a sense of the past and a sense of loss. "The realists do not take a photograph for a 'copy' of reality, but for an emanation of **past reality :** a **magic,** not an art" (Barthes, p. 88). The photographs are all self-conscious. They are all intensively **posed,** as if indeed to deliver up their "essence" (Elder, p. 48). For me, however, their collective **punctum** resides in the fact that they all involve holding.

Although severed from the present by their place in time past, the characters in these photographs are all joined together. A little girl (is she the grandmother ?) stands on a smiling man's shoulders, while hints of country music are whispered in the background. Near the beginning of the film, we see a shot of the youthful Martin holding one of the twins ; then another shot of a woman whom we cannot yet know is the mother holding the other twin ; and then there is a four-shot of all of them, united now in the present moment within the frame as they used to be in the past in their life together. As in all the other photographs in the film, while holding one another the characters gaze out as us like some kind of plea, as if asking to be remembered, accepted, understood.

This touching motif is also strongly present within the actuality sections of the film, between the girls themselves and between the girls and their grandparents – but never, inevitably, between the girls and their parents. With their immediate past, the twins are apparently "out-of-touch."

2. There is an opposition between severance and suture that is also intimately structured into the form of the film. Throughout **The Wish,** there is a deliberate dislocation of space and time within the images and between the images and the sounds. This dislocation simultaneously parallels and kinaesthetically re-creates the disjunctive, non-linear nature of memory and of dreams.

The second shot of the film provides a characteristic example. After the twins have been established with a wishbone making their wish, we cut away to a group-shot of Martin with this crew, as if presenting the point-of-view, as if shooting the opening shot. But this image cannot suture in the way it appears to be doing. It is "irrational" (in the sense that a drawing by Escher is irrational or that an equation in algebra can be described as irrational). It doesn't fully match.

To begin with, although the twins have been established together by the lake, the camera in tight close-up panning from one to another, thus "joining" them within the shot, one of the twins is also present in the group-shot of the crew. Furthermore, by the time we cut back to the twins and hear Martin questioning them about their wish, not only is the distance implied by the sound of his voice different from the distance implied by the long-shot of the crew but the girls have changed their position within the frame. Though both the purpose and the context is different, this effect is analagous to that found by Bill Nichols in the central still from **Letter to Jane :**

> *The play between word and image remains a site for disintegration as well as integration, of non-cooperation as well as incorporation. (***Nichols,** *1981, p. 64).*

There is something in these dislocations, in this "irrational" quality, even if just **sensed** on an initial viewing, that contributes to the anxiety of the film, to its sense of loss and its desire.

By the end of the film, while these disjunctions are resolved in terms of the narrative (the group-shot of the crew is placed within a sequence that shows the twins arriving during the penultimate scene of the film), the anxiety remains. Furthermore, the twins give voice to the film's controlling mystery. "We don't know yet," one of them replies when asked

about their wish. "So far," says the other. Then the Kodak punch-marks flash through the image as it freezes on this note of non-resolution. The mystery is preserved.

3. While there are many other examples of disjunction and dislocation within **The Wish** – most obvious is the train journey **to** the cottage that appears in the middle of the film – the third structuring principle that I would like to discuss as central revolves around the motif of the palimpsest. This also evokes ideas of changes over time, always with the potential of a sense of something lost.

An actual palimpsest is present in the film in the form of an old French manual from 1850. It has been transformed into a cook-book. Similarly, in one scene we see the girls dressing up in old clothes and in yet another we see that someone is using the grandmother's old house in a new way. Artefacts from the past are utilized to bring about transformations. So Martin Duckworth has utilized his own past to bring about this film.

This transformational process is most intricately associated with the use of two stills. Let us call them the Tombstone still and the Arrival still. For it is not true (as I have implied) that all the stills in **The Wish** are derived from the past. Some of them are stolen from the actuality footage, their colour is erased, and they are introduced into the film's structure – once as a recapitulation (the crew-shot still) but generally as anticipations of moments yet to come.

Both the Tombstone still and the Arrival still appear several times in the course of the film; and like the cutaway to the crew at the opening of the film, their appearance can create anxiety because, if we are watching the film closely, we can recognize that they do not match the "real" stills that are derived from the past. These freeze-frame stills, on the contrary, anticipate the future – or at least a future moment in the narrative when their purpose will be resolved. Furthermore, this sense of anticipation which builds in the film also contributes, kinaesthetically, to the film's desire.

These two particular stills are crucial because they are used, finally, to frame a key moment in the film. This occurs at the end of the graveyard sequence which is the last extended narrative sequence in the film.

The graveyard sequence is rich in the twin associations of death and life, contrasting as it does the immobility of the tombstones with the energy of the children; and like the still photographs, the tombstones also contain traces of the past, of the local family history. They refer to what is absent (and what is yet to come). Indeed, it is largely because the girls' wish is associated with this sequence that we might defensibly assume that their mother is dead.

"Will you come home?" or "Will you come home again?" This wish has twice been heard before in the film (if our ears are attentive and the acoustics favourable): once over an earlier shot of the Tombstone still and one again over a still of the mother. This time, it is slow in preparation. After their lunch, during which Marion had asked her question about dying and burying, the children have been playing about the graveyard, looking for signs of their grandparents' past. Marion discovers the Ball tombstone which is the burial site of the grandmother's family. Sylvia runs off to fetch the grandparents, and then they all gather round it in contemplation of this collective trace of death. The action ceases, the image freezes, the colour bleeds out, and it becomes the Tombstone still that we have seen several times before; and once again we hear one of the twins whisper: "Will you come home?" Then the four-shot that we have also already seen of the young Martin and his wife and family, and then we cut to the Arrival still (which also restates the "touching" motif) as the colour bleeds in and the arrival scene begins.

This bleeding of the colour, here very much like a palimpsest, out and in again, framing the final references to the past and the whispered hope for the future recapitulates with enormous formal authority both the death/life oppositions that inform the film and the statement of the children's wish and of the film's desire. Furthermore, this formal authority helps to create the extreme delight (indeed, **une jouissance**) that we can experience from an art work in which an aesthetic problem has been so innovatively resolved.

Arguably, it is also the formal authority of this film that helps to imply a loss beyond that of the actual mother. The film creates a sense of something missing. "No fish!" one of the twins exclaims when they return from trolling with their grandfather; and during a later moment when the grandfather goes out alone, all he brings back is "one medium perch." Next time, as he says, he hopes to bring back "something worthwhile." There is thus a generalized feeling of something-that-was-there-then that-is-not-here-now. These effects all re-inforce the sense of loss and absence, and it is by these means that personal nostalgia can be elevated into art, that empirical film practice can transform itself into theory, and that – indeed – traces of the physical can connote the metaphysical: that which lies beyond.

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"These ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives." (Sontag, p. 9) Will the mother return? The twins cannot know. But other questions are suggested by the film to which there are no easy answers. They too become part of its mystery, part of its generalized sense of **Angst.**

While not wishing to get trapped in the intentional fallacy that would involve Martin Duckworth the man, I might nevertheless approach this matter another way by asking a highly speculative question: why was this film made? Could we suggest hypothetically that, like most family photographs, the making of the film initially had something to do with the preservation of memory?

> *Memory implies a certain act of redemption. What is remembered has been saved from nothingness. What is forgotten has been abandoned.* (**Berger,** *p. 54).*

Kracauer also believed that through its articulation of the natural, photography could "redeem" reality, that it could atone for past sins. Now it may be an extrapolation to speak about the feeling of guilt that one may derive from **The Wish** (i.e., the feeling may be my own); at the same time this feeling is re-inforced by another "personal" film that Duckworth made at the Film Board in 1973.

Although less finely nuanced (I

believe), **Accident** is structured in much the same way. While simulating a crash sequence for a film about flight that Duckworth was making with Pat Crawley, the plane actually crashed. The pilot was killed and Pat Crawley, who was filming from inside the plane, was seriously injured. Crawley's footage of the crash survived as did Duckworth's (of course) who was filming from the ground. While the flight film was cancelled, Duckworth went on to make **Accident** which basically investigates Crawley's feelings during the crash, indeed the "vision" that he experienced during what he was sure would be the moment of his own death.

It would require another paper to investigate this film, but I mention it briefly simply to suggest certain parallels between **Accident** and **The Wish. Accident** also alternates black-&-white with colour sequences and it also makes use of interpolated photographs. If the structure of each film implies a dialectic between how-it-is-happening-now and how-it-was-then (as I have said), one might also sense a more speculative tension at work in each film.

In **Accident,** Duckworth might have been in the plane. He might have been killed. In **The Wish,** the mother might not have left; and if the children's wish is to be honoured (it is honoured in the film with the force and delicacy of a prayer), she might come home. Thus there is in these films the additional dialectic between how-it-was-then and how-it-might-have-been. It is the possibility of perceiving in these films this more speculative tension that makes each film, whether in Kracauer's or in Berger's sense of the term, seem like an act of redemption. And where there is a need for redemption there has always been a feeling of guilt.

This feeling, finally, is inescapable for all photography and all actuality footage that draws its raw material from actions of living concern. All images of real people are in one sense predatory. They can create simultaneously a feeling of extreme pleasure and moral unease. If all images are emanations from the referent then in a certain sense something from the referent has been taken away. Even the extraordinary form of **The Wish**, a film which literally tells its story backwards, on reflection creates an aftertaste of personal manipulation. "Reality is summed up in an array of casual fragments – an endlessly alluring, poignantly reductive way of dealing with the world." (Sontag, p. 80) And later on Sontag suggests that "photography inevitably entails a certain patronizing of reality" (p. 80) Actual people and actual events have been utilized to create a cinematic reality in which, finally, they have no part.

While endemic to the photographic and documentary process, these moral considerations have little to do with **The Wish** as a film. With its fragmented form, its richness of connotation, the sense that it conveys of a past that can barely be heard (the hints of the gigue music) and of a future that can scarcely be hoped for, **The Wish** is finally a philosophical poem about the nature of time and memory which celebrates the precariousness of the living moment within an irrational world pervaded by loss and need. It is a unique achievement within the history of cinema. It ought to be better known.

Carleton University

*An earlier version of this essay appeared in **Ciné-Tracts**, No. 17 (Summer/Fall 1982).*

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"Hill Street Blues": A Challenge to Television Norms

by Carol A. Rutter

As if copyrights to film form, structure and technique had suddenly lapsed in 1979, cinema travelled to television in 1980 – and arrived safely via **Hill Street Blues.** The series' subtle scripts and performances, variable lighting, sound-track density and many types of point of view are standard for film but new to television.

According to Todd Gitlin in "Striking a New Note with Hill Street Blues" ("American Film," September 1981), the program's creators, Steven Bochco and Michael Kozoll, wanted to shoot the entire program in black-and-white 16mm film and hand-held camera. They obviously compromised by shooting with 35mm color film and limiting most hand-held shots to the regular Roll Call sequence. The only other detectable compromise is the cliff-hanger preceding the mid-episode commercial.

In other series, tidy closure follows an establishing opening and climactic middle, and episodes are usually divided between one plot and one sub-plot. **Hill Street Blues'** ensemble cast is simultaneously involved in multiple sub-plots, each of which ends either with closure, ambiguously or with suggested continuation. Sub-plots with suggested continuation often are not continued, or continuation is delayed. In the Grace and Phil relationship, discussed below, continuation is suspended for over one season. These delays or interruptions somehow are more faithful to real life and "real" time. Tidy closures play with time so that answering all questions raised fits one episode of "reel" time.

Disregard of TV conventions is further evident in **Hill Street Blues'** script economy and compressed material. In the average dramatic series, 60 minutes of material, less ads, can be comprehended by most in that time-frame: indeed, often a point is repeated for those assumed to have missed it the first time. Not only does **Hill Street Blues** present ideas and information only once, but the off-screen inferences and ellipses are such that about 100 minutes of material are compressed into 60. This quality probably accounts for Veronica (Joyce Davenport) Hamel's assertion that she receives more mail about plot confusion than anything else.

Seamless transitions may elicit some plot confusion. For example, in one episode Goldblume says that he must talk to someone. While the camera follows Goldblume to the left, Esterhaus enters the frame moving to the right. As their paths cross, the camera switches directions to follow Esterhaus. Goldblume's intended conversation happens in ellipsis and may or may not be referred to later. In more traditional television, the camera would have followed Goldblume, then cut to Goldblume's conversation, followed by a cut to Esterhaus.

Besides seamless transitions from one sub-plot to the next, other methods to compress material are used in **Hill Street Blues.** The first of two examples involves an episode with Grace Gardner (Barbara Babcock) and Phil Esterhaus (Michael Conrad). Grace and Phil's relationship has them established as middle-age lovers with inferred adolescent passion, sexual creativity and limitless stamina.

In this episode, Grace complains to Phil about a barking dog in her building. Phil's reaction shot suggests: "Poor Grace, her rest and peace of mind is at stake." Phil has the dog's owner picked up and intends to verbally intimidate him. Before Phil has completed bullying the 5'2" dog-owner, the latter interrupts Phil with something like: "Let me tell you about Mrs. Gardner. She's just retaliating because our affair ended. Of course she didn't tell you that my dog's barking is like a whimper compared to her acrobatics with some six-and-a-half-foot lug (Phil is over six feet tall). And to think I gave her a pair of leather sheets..."

Phil's reactions underscore the comedy, as he is incapable of continuing his verbal harrassment. We simultaneously learn about off-screen events, Grace's sexual history and the characters of Grace and Phil are further developed.

Almost every episode contains a comic pause or throwaway sequence like this. Often in television what was deliriously funny in the writing sessions can come off flat during shooting. But **Hill Street Blues** rarely has flat moments, as if the writers have a sixth sense about what will and won't work on screen. Furthermore, the peripheral activity in these throwaways often mutely communicates supplementary information. Grace mainly visits Phil in the squad room. Their verbally suggestive encounters are for the most part unnoticed by the characters who crowd the frame

on either side of Grace and Phil, suggesting that they are too busy to eavesdrop, or that, even if they do hear something, they are relaxed and liberal.

Subsequent references to Phil's off-duty life are further enriched by this piece. Grace was temporarily written out shortly after this episode. However, by the time Phil's love life is again referred to, we are not surprised to learn that he is involved with a high-school senior. Nor are we surprised that Phil finds nothing odd about her cancelling a date because of homework.

The second example of compressed material is contained within one episode. Again it is an optional comic interlude, however, this time, dramatic ambiguity is highlighted. Coffey (Ed Marinaro) and Bates (Betty Thomas) answer a complaint from the telephone company which cannot check equipment in an apartment because the tenant won't let anyone in. The officers force the door open after knocking several times and find the tenant hovering in a corner of a room that looks like a demolition site. The tenant is filthy, dishevelled and resembles a frightened psychopath.

Coffey goes for the phone and the tenant has a fit, claiming that the phone is his "only way out." He explains that he is a visitor here and his spaceship will soon hand to pick him up, but they will phone first. Bates and Coffey soothe and reassure him, finally convincing him to go with them. On his way out, the tenant rips a pay-phone off the wall and jealously clutches it. Eye communication between the officers suggests that it would be better to book him with the disconnected pay-phone than try to take it away.

During the precinct booking, (we think) an off-screen telephone rings. The tenant picks up the pay-phone receiver, listens and says : "Yes... uh hunh... great... I'll be waiting." He puts the receiver back and announces : "I'm their next stop. It shouldn't be too long now." He is then led off-screen to the holding cells. Many sequences later, Leo, the cell custodian, asks Coffey and Bates to go to the cells. The shots then show only empty cells followed by non-plussed reaction shots of the three officers.

The ambiguity starts with the complaint. Why does the phone company want to check the line ? Were strange signals registered by them ? Secondly, which phone rang? (This seems to play with our familiarity with off-screen sounds.) And where did the tenant go ? Typically, this was never followed-up. The raised questions were not answered, again breaking classical narrative strategies. In addition, it is often considered acceptable to borrow ideas from another source, eg. film. A sub-plot will rather than borrowing from, say, E.T., allude to the E.T. fervor in a most individual manner.

Hill Street Blues visually condenses its material as well, underscoring script and sequence compression. Reducing a busy 35mm image onto a TV screen often no larger than 26" also breaks with television conventions, especially images that are softly lit with dense depth of field and accompanied by a multi-layered soundtrack. Other programs often use glaring overlighting, a thin soundtrack and an unmistakeable photographic subject adroitly centered within a relatively bare two-dimensional frame. Rarely do camera movements or montage serve to articulate independently or to underscore the moment.

Point of view is also rare in most dramatic TV series. Only two recent examples come to mind : M.A.S.H. and WKRP, in which an entire episode each was subjectively shot. In M.A.S.H., the camera assumed the identity of a patient, while in WKRP, it assumed the identity of a camera and TV crew as intruders into Herb Tarlich's home. In both instances, the other characters directly address the camera lens. It is unlikely that even one **Hill Street Blues** sequence has been similarly shot.

In **Hill Street Blues** a much broader and more radical application of point of view is employed. Even the acceptable technique of a character glancing off-screen followed by a shot of what he is looking at is rarely used, especially since most **Hill Street Blues** shots are medium shots. In lieu of this, the looker and the looked-at are often in the same frame. An example below with Mick Belker illustrates this, and other points.

It seems appropriate to label **Hill Street Blues'** applications of point of view "experimental." True, within cinema no new ground is broken, but in a TV context these are indeed new and radical techniques. While other programs borrow script ideas from film, **Hill Street Blues** borrows from film technical and narrative parameters.

The first type of point-of-view is with the characterization of Fay (Barbara Bosson), Furillo's ex-wife. At first, we are puzzled that she, relative to the other characters, is so underdeveloped. She is vulnerable, cause-oriented, stubborn and hopes that her visits to Furillo will woo him away from Joyce, his girlfriend. We see the other characters in and out of their dominant roles, but not Fay. We also see the other characters without Furillo, but not very often do we see Fay without Furillo. So Fay's character is filtered to us through Furillo's point of view.

Further experiments can be enumerated simply by examining the first ten minutes of each episode. In **Hill Street Blues** the subjective camera is used in Roll Call, except that this character is never revealed and other characters do not address the lens. This unidentified character plays the more passive role of Roll Call observer.

The camera intends to simulate an observer's head movements during Esterhaus's progression from one item to the next. In some episodes, this character is more distracted than in others, because he (the camera) looks more often at the assembled officers eating take-out breakfasts or talking than he does at Esterhaus. This suggested character often hears Esterhaus and not the conversations of those in the frame, according to the accompanying soundtrack.

A third and fourth type of point of view follow Roll Call. For instance, Mick Belker (Bruce Weitz) telephones his mother in mid-ground. As he talks, a drugged degenerate scales a glass wall in the background. Since most of this shot has the camera watching Mick watch the degenerate, one could say that this is Mick's perspective ; the comedy is derived from Mick's inability to pay attention to the phone call. However, the camera alerts us to the degenerate before Mick sees him, so this could be a continuation of the unidentified observer's point of view carried over from Roll Call.

More often, Roll Call is followed by static medium squad-room shots,

often an episode's most crowded sequence. Typically, there is multiple and simultaneous background activity, two talking figures (often Renko and Hill) in mid-ground and a space in the foreground, frequently blocked by extras scurrying to the left or right. The volume of secondary sounds is so high that we must fight to hear (eavesdrop on) the speakers.

Rarely alerted by camera movement, our attention is sometimes diverted by a parade of thugs or hookers filing by close to the speakers, who may or may not stop to look. When they don't pause to look, the viewer must chose where to direct his attention, because the camera won't reframe for the viewer. This imposed choice alludes to interactive video, in which the viewer must transcend a passive role and decide. A seasoned **Hill Street Blues** viewer soon realizes that whatever the option, the loss of one is not crucial to the understanding of that episode.

The series' fifth and perhaps most radical experiment plays among the writer, character and spectator. For example, a more conventional build-up to violence includes shots juxtaposed to build spectator tension. The writer tips off the spectator to imminent violence before the character is aware of danger. So writer and spectator collude, waiting for character reaction.

In **Hill Street Blues,** shot juxtaposition in sequences leading to violence ally the spectator with the character. For example, Hill (Michael Warren) and Renko (Charles Haid) investigate a disturbance outside a man's home. Through medium shots and shot-reverse-shots, interviews reveal that a man is inside the house with a gun and is threatening the neighbors. Just enough piecemeal information establishes danger when an off-camera yell is heard. Renko, Hill *and* the camera simultaneously turn to identify the sound's source. Before we fully see who yelled, the gun fires and slow-motion begins. Conventionally the camera would turn before the characters do, evoking tension. This way, we are more predisposed to character identification. Moreover, the series gets away with the near cliche of slow-motion violence, because crises like this are perceived by the victims in slow motion–"It seemed like 15 minutes, but I was told it was just seconds."

Character also highlights a sixth example of point of view. Less radical, this is a staple of cinema and some TV. Lucy Bates' vulnerability is underlined in her first fatal shooting of a suspect. Officers mill around the scene and Lucy reassures them that she is o.k. She repeats this to Furillo when he and Davenport arrive and excuses herself to go buy Lifesavers(!). Several shots later, Furillo and Davenport are in a car ready to leave. In a medium shot, Davenport hugs Furillo then cut to her point of view over his shoulder, showing various officers finalizing their work. Then cut to Furillo's point of view over Davenport's shoulder, showing Lucy sinking to the ground against the candy store wall (without Lifesavers), crying, followed by Furillo's reaction. Not only is this poignant, but the series of shots is only accompanied by ambient sounds. So, scenes without dialogue are effectively injected into **Hill Street Blues** and are not often tried elsewhere. Furthermore, cop shows before **Hill Street Blues** would emphasize the shooting instead of officer reaction.

It is this kind of fearless experimentation, subtlety of characterization and other acts of disobedience to TV norms that makes even the worst **Hill Street Blues** episode or sub-plot significantly more engaging than the best offerings of many other series.

Concordia University

Regional Filmmaking: Manitoba's Fragile Eco-System

by Gene Walz

Because of the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, and the Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg has long been recognized as a Canadian cultural centre. It has never been a movie centre. Before 1970 the number of professional films made in Manitoba could be counted on the be-mittened fingers of one hand. Since then, however, a resourceful and tenacious group of filmmakers has managed to establish a more than local reputation. In the last four years two dozen films made in Manitoba have won awards at international festivals and competitions (see appendix). Ironically, just when Manitoba filmmaking is coming into its own, the Applebaum-Hébert report threatens to bomb it back into the cinematic stone ages.

That there is a substantial number of filmmakers who not only make films in Manitoba but make a living making films is the result of three simultaneous but unrelated events: the move toward regionalization of film production by the National Film Board, the founding of a local filmmaking co-op, and the formation of the Manitoba Film Producers Association, a lobbying group of commercial filmmakers. It is through the combined efforts of all three of these organizations that filmmaking stays alive in the province.

The National Film Board has made filmmaking forays into Manitoba at various times in its 40-year history. In 1945 the provincial music festival was captured in a film called **Listen to the Prairies**. Second World War propaganda-film techniques such as the resounding "voice of God" narrator and a story structured on the determined banding-together of an army of workers against a common enemy – the Red River – were used to good effect in **City in Siege**, a film about the great flood of 1950. And Roman Kroiter's memorable study, **Paul Tomkowicz : Street Railway Switchman** (1954), was filmed along the snow-swept streetcar tracks of Portage Avenue. But, until the decision was made in the late '60s to establish four regional production facilities across Canada, the National Film Board seemed to be interested in the prairies only as a marketing area. The system of "production representatives," designed to feed local ideas to Montreal from across Canada, failed to attract much attention to Manitoba.

Although an attempt at regionalized filmmaking had been made by the NFB in the late '60s, severe budget and staff cuts in 1969-70 forced the closing of production facilities in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Halifax. A pilot operation was maintained in Vancouver, however, and by the mid-'70s regional centres had been re-established in all three cities with a promise (still unfulfilled) that one-half of the NFB's annual $18 million production budget would be spent in the regions by 1982.

Winnipeg's was unique among all the newly-functioning centres when it was re-opened in May, 1974. Unlike Toronto (whose centre did not set up shop until 1976) or Vancouver, Winnipeg at this time did not have much of a film community. Halifax faced the same predicament but solved its problem by parachuting an entire film production crew into that city from the Board's Montreal head office in April, 1973. The prairie region simply named distribution officer Ken Shere as acting executive producer, and assigned Hans Oomes as a regional technician, Charles Lough as studio administrator, and Jerry Krepakevitch as program producer. They were given a mandate to make contact with local filmmaking aspirants.

Three months before the Prairie Regional Production Office was officially opened, the University of Manitoba sponsored a Canadian film symposium. Producers, directors, actors, technicians, critics, and various hangers-on from all over the country gathered for a week of seminars, friendly discussions, acrimonious battles, premieres, press-conferences, and parties. In the aftermath, several local filmmakers realized that they were numerous enough to band together and create a support-group-cum-film-equipment-depot. Within a year The Winnipeg Film Group (as it was called) had drawn up a constitution (which, most importantly, established the group as a non-profit organization with charitable status – so that any and all donations would be tax-deductible) and was planning its first productions.

In the years just prior to the funding of the WFG, independent films were sporadic ventures which offered very little opportunity for follow-up work. Vic Cowie, a professor of English at the University of Manitoba, had used the department's theatre budget to make **And No Birds Sing** in 1968. The film, photo-

graphed by Richard Stringer, won an award at the Vancouver Film Festival for best film over 30 minutes. It took Cowie thirteen years to make another film – a musical for children done for CKY-TV and called **The Curse of Ponsonby Hall**. Stringer had made his reputation as a cameraman and director on a number of sponsored or government-funded films ; his own independent production, **Recess 10:15 – 10:30**, edited by Bob Lower, was nominated for best documentary at the 1972 Canadian Film Awards. He then moved to Toronto. Leonard Yakir had made a 36-minute film, **Main Street Soldier**, also in 1972, and one year later Ian Elkin directed **Profits and the Puck : A Hockey Primer**.

Yakir, Lower, and Elkin became founding members of the Winnipeg Film Group along with David and Vesna Cherniack, who had made **A Better Choice** for the Manitoba government ; Leon Johnson and Brad Caslor, who had been animating segments of **Sesame Street** for CBC-TV ; and Tom Fletcher, a former CBC employee who had opened his own production house. Yakir went on to direct a feature film in 1975 entitled **The Mourning Suit** which was the official Canadian entry at the Locarno International Film Festival that year. The others were the main people to whom the NFB turned to begin developing a sustainable filmmaking community in Manitoba.

By 1976 Mike Scott had returned to his hometown from the head office in Montreal to join Jerry Krepakevitch as a second regional programmer. (He would shortly become executive producer.) Adequate film labs had been set up in the city because of the prospect of NFB business ; workshops in sound, lighting, cinematography, and drama had been initiated to train local artisans ; and a branch office for the prairies – a "second desk" – had been opened in Edmonton. (It recently gained its autonomy.) But ambitious film projects were still felt to be beyond the range of most filmmakers working in Manitoba. **Paper Wheat**, for instance, was proposed as a prairie region production in 1977 ; it was, however, reluctantly passed on to the NFB's Montreal office which dispatched Albert Kish and a more experienced crew to film this unique Canadian play.

It is a measure of the rapid growth in the filmmaking capabilities of the prairie production unit that, within four years of turning down **Paper Wheat**, the office released **Something Hidden : A Portrait of Wilder Penfield**, a more complex undertaking which several veteran NFB filmmakers had attempted but reluctantly abandoned. **Something Hidden**, an examination by Bob Lower of the life and career of the world-renowned brain surgeon from Montreal (the head office's own back yard !), is a fifty-megaton signal directed at the eastern establishment that filmmaking on the prairies has come of age, that "major league" films on topics of national and international significance – not just about flatness, cold, and Ukrainians – can be made in Winnipeg.

The signal sent out by **Something Hidden** was reinforced by both the quality and the variety of other recently-made Winnipeg films. **Ted Baryluk's Grocery**, a movie about the decline of a neighborhood store made by John Paskievich and Mike Mirus entirely from black-and-white still photographs and location sound, was Canada's only representative at the 1982 Cannes International Film Festival. **It's a Hobby for Harvey**, Barry Lank's sprightly and bemused look at the world's whistling champion, has become one of the largest-selling, independently-produced short films in Canada. Allan Kroeker's adaptations of Canadian short stories are proof that inexpensive productions need not be shabby or shallow ; they also have established a dramatic precedent that other NFB regions are now anxious to emulate. And Richard Condie's **Getting Started** and **Pigbird** have re-confirmed Winnipeg's reputation as an animated cartoon centre. While films made in Manitoba, therefore, may not yet be startlingly innovative or controversial, they are well-crafted and distinctive enough – even at this early stage in the development of a local film industry – to silence all but the harshest critics of regional and co-operative filmmaking.

Despite the fact that filmmaking in Manitoba has come a long way in a very short time, the prospects for the future are still no cause for elation. Money is, as it always has been, the main difficulty. Ever since "Ten Percent" Ernie Shipman breezed into Winnipeg in 1920, convinced city investors to put up a quarter of a million dollars to adapt a story by local writer Ralph Connor, and then quietly dissolved his company without paying off his investors when the movie, **God's Crucible**, failed to attract outside audiences, Winnipeggers have been understandably wary of investing in movies. Recent experiences have not changed things for the better. In 1975 a local businessman imported a "Hollywood director" named Deke Miles to make **The Melting Pot**, a story about two draft-dodgers from the States who come to Winnipeg, help fight the great flood of 1950, and fall in love with two local girls. The movie met with gales of derisive laughter at its premiere and has never been screened since. Halya Kuchmij's award-winning documentary **The Strongest Man in the World** was financed almost entirely by Manitoba investors through the federal government's tax-shelter programme ; it recouped its investment. But **Autumn Born**, a soft-core feature starring Playmate of the Year Dorothy Stratten in her first film appearance, made and financed entirely in Winnipeg, was never distributed commercially (though it is now available on videotape). And **If You Could See What I Hear**, a Hollywood production about a blind American singer bankrolled by Manitoba money, was a major disappointment at the box-office. People are now so wary that acclaimed French director Bertrand Tavernier, who would like to make a Canadian-French co-production in one of the French-speaking communities of southern Manitoba, has as yet been unable to raise local money to match the French funding available. The postponement of his project has cast a pall over the Manitoba film scene for a variety of reasons. The Canadian Film Development Corporation has done little to alleviate the situation. While it allotted $850,000 from April, 1982 to the end of the year, only one percent found its way to the prairies (68% went to Ontario).

Because of the state of the economy, Winnipeg's film production houses are currently being squeezed, some to near breaking-point. Ken Perkins' company continues to prosper largely because of animation and K-Tel commercials. But Tom Fletcher, one of the more active filmmakers in the late '70s, has

transferred his FSI Productions to Toronto because of shrinking opportunities in Manitoba. Credo Group, riding high last year as a result of their most effective media campaign for the NDP in 1981, have not seen as many projects materialize as they had anticipated. Still, advertising agencies, corporations, and other organizations now realize that they no longer need to go to Toronto or Vancouver for slick, professional productions. And one local television station, CKND, has hired Allan Kroeker to produce and/or direct three more Canadian short stories because of the success of his **The Catch**. Whether this sort of film work will be continued, however, and whether other stations or production houses follow suit, depends on sales of these films outside the province.

The Winnipeg Film Group, finally settled into its new quarters, expects 1983 to be the most productive year in its history with as many as ten films slated for premiere presentations. Previews arranged by a recently-hired part-time distribution officer have been encouraging. Films such as Barry Lank's **Kelekis**, a history of a venerable North-end restaurant, Victor Dobchuk's look at Chilean political refugees living in Winnipeg: **So Far from Home,** Elise Swerhone's portrait of the internationally known artist Esther Warkov, **A Spy in the House**, and three "experimental" films: **Room Four Memory** by Perry Stratychuk, **Rushes** by David Demchuk, and especially **A Fascist Can't Dance** by John Kozak all look both professional and marketable, even in competition with the highly subsidized products now coming from Access Alberta and TVOntario. But the return on these films has so far been minimal, and the follow-up proposals by some of these filmmakers could strain the resources of the group. A contract with the Manitoba Department of Education to market their educational and instructional films (especially Allan Kroeker's **God Is Not a Fish Inspector** and **Waiting for Morning**) has provided unanticipated extra revenue at a time when it is most needed. Projects are becoming more numerous and more ambitious, a fact that is borne out by **Nick, Nicki, and the International Style**, a three-part, feature-length film now being completed by John Paizs.

But the future of filmmaking in Manitoba clearly rests on the shoulders of the Prairie Production Office of the National Film Board which over the past three years has spent approximately $1.5 million in the province. There would be no filmmaking community on the prairies without the NFB. The film labs are sustained by it. Independent filmmakers, particularly those who work with the Winnipeg Film Group, are assisted in their attempts to finish, promote, and distribute their films. Everyone benefits directly or indirectly from the NFB presence. If, therefore, the Applebaum-Hébert report succeeds in shutting down the NFB as a filmmaking operation, the consequences for Manitoba and the prairies would be disastrous. Few here could survive without it; most filmmakers would be forced out of town or out of business.

Even if the NFB survives, there is still cause for some concern. Mike Scott, the executive producer for the prairies for the past five years, has resigned and returned to filmmaking rather than continue the administrative battles. Scott is the person most responsible for giving films from the Winnipeg office their distinctive stamp. His interest in and experience with fiction films led to the production of several documentaries structured like dramas (notably **Nose and Tina** by Norma Bailey) and to adaptations of Rudy Wiebe's **Tudor King** and W.D. Valgardson's **Capital** and **The Peddler**. He has also encouraged animation (**Blowhard**, a parable about non-renewable dragon power by Brad Caslor and Chris Hinton and three award-winning films by Richard Condie) and documentaries that emphasize the indomitability of the human spirit: **Loved, Honoured, and Bruised**, a film about wife-beating by Gail Singer, **The Boy Who Turned Off**, an unrelenting look at the effects on a family of an autistic child by Larry Kurnarsky, and **Priory**, Mark Dolgoy's sensitive examination of life in an old-age home. Scott's replacement is Jan D'Arcy, a person with very few film credentials but extensive experience in administration and political (NDP) organizing. Her job will not be an easy one.

The next year will be extremely critical for D'Arcy and the NFB (and, therefore, for the rest of the film community in Manitoba). Several major projects begun under Mike Scott's tutelage are now nearing completion: an experimental animated film by Alan Pakarnyk, documentaries on women body-builders by Barry Lank and on native migration to the city by Norma Bailey and Ian Elkin, and a fictional documentary on the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 by Bob Lower. The success or failure of these films could have repercussions for years to come. For politics and power-plays have had a relatively minor role in filmmaking in Manitoba to this point. With projects getting bigger and more ambitious and with more filmmakers developing the experience and expertise to compete for project backing, the problems could suddenly multiply.

In their presentation to the minister of Communications in response to the Applebaum-Hébert report, members of the independent film community compared the film industry on the prairies to the eco-system of the tundra – an eco-system which, despite the toughness and hardiness of its components, is delicate and fragile. They elaborate on the tundra analogy in this way:

> The slightest disturbance reverberates, threatening to destroy the entire system. The harshness of the environment makes every element dependent for its very existence on every other. So it is with us. Those things which nourish us can't be separated from each other. Damage to one can mean disaster for all.

It is for this reason that filmmakers who have chosen to work in Manitoba, at a time in their history when they have every reason to be optimistic because of their recent accomplishments, are still desperately concerned.

University of Manitoba

Portions of this text appeared in an earlier form in ***ArtsManitoba.***

Appendix :

Award-Winning Manitoba Films

Blowhard by Brad Caslor and Chris Hinton
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Animated Film – Yorkton International Short Film and Video Festival, 1979.
- Special Commendation for Animation Techniques – Rio de Janeiro International Scientific Film Festival, 1979.

Capital by Allan Kroeker
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Performance (Ed McNamara) – Yorkton, 1981.
- Award of Excellence – AMTEC Media Festival, Winnipeg, 1982.

The Catch by Allan Kroeker
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Video Production – Yorkton, 1980.
- Best Drama, Can-Pro Awards, Ottawa, 1982.

Chasing the Eclipse by Norma Bailey and Ian Elkin
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Documentary – Yorkton, 1980.

The Curse of Ponsonby Hall by Vic Cowie and Vic Davies
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Video Production, Best Children's Production – Yorkton, 1982.

The Dreamer by John Paizs
- Best Animated Short – London Film Festival, 1978.

Getting Started by Richard Condie
- Bijou, Best Animation – Canadian Short Film Festival, Toronto, 1980.
- Special Jury Award, Best Sound Effects – 4th World Festival of Animation, Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 1980.
- First Prize, Category B – International Animation Festival, Espinho, Portugal, 1980.
- Diploma of Merit, Tampere International Film Festival, Finland, 1981.
- Fipresci Jury Award, Best Animation – International Short Film Festival, Cracow, Poland, 1981.
- Bijou, Outstanding Animation – Canadian Short Film Festival, Toronto, 1981.

God Is Not A Fish Inspector by Allan Kroeker
- Best Film – Northwest Film Seminar Competition, Seattle, 1980.
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Screenplay – Yorkton, 1981.

It's A Hobby For Harvey by Barry Lank
- Chris Plague, Best Film, Columbus International Short Film Festival, 1982.

Joe's Gym by Elise Swerhone
- Award of Merit – AMTEC, 1982.

John Law and the Mississippi Bubble by Richard Condie
- Best Animation, Tampere International Film Festival, Finland, 1980.

Loved, Honoured, and Bruised by Gail Singer
- Certificate of Merit – Cork Film Festival, Ireland, 1981.

The New Mayor by Ian Elkin, Bob Lower, Brad Caslor
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Public Affairs Film – Yorkton, 1979.

Nose and Tina by Norma Bailey
- Golden Sheaf Awards, Best Cinematography, Best Film – Yorkton, 1981.
- Bijou Awards, Outstanding Direction, Outstanding Film under 30 Minutes, Canadian Short Film and TV Festival, Toronto, 1981.

The Pedlar by Allan Kroeker
- Award of Merit – AMTEC, 1982.

The Performer (L'Artiste) by Norma Bailey
- Special Jury Award, Cannes International Film Festival, 1980.

Petroleum's Progress by Tom Fletcher
- Red Ribbon, 23rd American Film Festival, New York, 1981.

Pigbird by Richard Condie
- First Prize, Category C – International Animation Festival, Ottawa, 1982.
- First Prize, Educational Film – World Festival of Animation Films, Zagreb, Yugoslavia, 1982.
- Bijou, Animation Category – Canadian Film and Television Awards, 1982.

Priority by Mark Dolgoy
- Red Ribbon, 22nd American Film Festival, New York, 1980.

Room Four Memory by Perry Stratychuk
- Bronze Medal – American International Film Festival, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1981.

Slide, Flip, Turn by Kim Johnston
- Award of MERIT – AMTEC, 1982.

The Strongest Man in the World by Halya Kuchmij
- Bijou, Best Documentary Film under 30 Minutes – Canadian Film and Television Awards, Toronto, 1981.
- Golden Sheaf Award, Best Producer – Yorkton, 1981.

Ted Baryluk's Grocery by John Paskievich and Mike Mirus
- Official Canadian Entry – Cannes International Film Festival, 1982.

Wood Mountain Poems by Harvey Spak
- Best Production under 30 Minutes – Banff International Festival of Films for Television, 1980.

"Inner Regions": The Films of Allan Kroeker

by Hildegard Froese Tiessen
and Paul Gerard Tiessen

Allan Kroeker is a young, fairly prolific Manitoba filmmaker whose work already merits serious attention. Now thirty years old, Kroeker has, in five years of free-lance filmmaking, been a principal participant – as screenwriter, director, cinematographer, and/or editor – in some thirteen films, many around 30 minutes in length. Of these he has directed nine, beginning in 1978 with **How Much Land Does a Man Need?** Six of the works he has directed are short fiction studies, based in each case on stories by three prose writers whose work he himself has adapted for the screen: four by Manitoba native W.D. Valgardson (one of these for video), one by Albertan Rudy Wiebe, and one by Leo Tolstoy.[1] He is currently considering, among others, another story by Wiebe.

Despite the apparent variety of sources from which he has taken his narrative subjects, or, perhaps, because of the degree of autonomy with which he has been able to appropriate his material, there is in the body of short dramatic films which Kroeker has directed a noteworthy thematic coherence, and, in introducing his work here, it is the nature of this thematic consistency that is our main focus. With each successive film, Kroeker has taken considerable latitude in his interpretation of original material. Indeed, he claims to perceive his story source only as a starting point (in his own words, "as a springboard" and in each case has proceeded to turn the writer's material into what is unmistakably his own. While it can also be argued that to a degree Kroeker has remained faithful to the stories he has adapted, it must be stressed that invariably he insists on, and gets, the last word.

Although the roots of Kroeker's persistent concerns are discernible in his narrative sources, it is in his aggressive re-statement of the literary texts that he personalizes theme, character, and setting. Accordingly (though Kroeker's interest in adaptation is not the subject of this paper), it is in our attention here and there to what he himself calls "finding a new centre" for his narrative texts that his thematic obsessions as a filmmaker become most evident. His vision is one dominated (indeed defined, far more than that of the short story writers) by the illusions and disillusionments – specifically, the betrayals – experienced by the already disenfranchised loners and exiles who are his protagonists.

Kroeker's films are often about man as outsider; man nervously, compulsively, desperately clinging to his one, narrowly-defined position somewhere on the ragged edge of the culture surrounding him; sometimes, indeed, on the edge of an already desperate sub-culture. Kroeker's protagonists move blindly along in illusions of their own, and of the world's, making. What Kroeker does not seem to allow them, in the end, is release from illusion into some kind of seeing. There are no

Director Allan Kroeker, during the filming in 1982 of ***The Pedlar*** *(1982)*

illuminations for his protagonists, no epiphanies. Only the viewer, by virtue of his dramatic distance from the action, as voyeur and as witness, is spared the apparently nihilistic vision that in the end defines the orb in which Kroeker's characters attempt to function.

In varying degrees in the works discussed here, the agent and nature of the betrayal are unlikely, yet appropriate. Let us look at an example: Fusi Bergman, in **God Is Not a Fish Inspector,** is betrayed by his daughter, Emma, who destroys his illusion of being the eternally mischievous, stubborn, adventuring prankster, cleverly out-witting some authority figure, whether it was a friend's father when he was a boy, or the fish inspectors now that he is old. Emma, frustrated in her attempts to stop her father's early morning fishing forays onto the lake, reports him to the authorities only to discover that they, whom Fusi delightedly believed he was eluding every morning, actually watched over him daily, charitably and invisibly assuring his safety as he carried out his little escapades. Here, as in Valgardson's short story, is the obvious irony: the agents of government, not the militantly Christian daughter, provide what Kroeker would regard as the ideal Christian norm in the story.

Through Kroeker's treatment of structure and development of character, a still deeper irony takes over as his main theme – the irony involving Fusi Bergman's perception of himself. For Kroeker, the primary and more subtle context for betrayal and loss of hope is found in the death of Jimmy Henderson, the friend whom Fusi tries to salvage from the demeaning atmosphere of Bethel House, the local old-folk's home.

While Jimmy Henderson is merely alluded to in Valgardson's story, Kroeker makes of him a more central figure. This mute victim of stroke epitomizes the condition of life from which Fusi is a fugitive: Jimmy is stripped by his institutional environment of a certain dignity that is implied simply by the state of adulthood. This fact is especially threatening to Fusi, who revels in his own free-wheeling independence, which he identifies with "being a man." Like a slightly anarchistic and now very old adolescent, Fusi feels threatened by the confinement and authority the old-folk's home represents. While his feelings are legitimate enough, and gain the audience's deep sympathy, it is clear, too, that the existence of the institution offers him the means for exploring the possibility of adventure and mischief, and so he announces to his friend, "I'm gonna bust you outa this place." Taking Jimmy with him on a summer afternoon outing to the lake shore, he says with both pleasure and defiance, "you can't live like a man (in there)."

Fusi Bergman (played by Ed McNamara) in ***God Is Not a Fish Inspector*** *(1980)*

Fusi happily wheels his boyhood friend to the dock on the lake not far from Bethel House, and gleefully relates to him his most recent successes at duping the fish inspectors (and, implicitly, defying his law-and-order religious daughter, as well as her husband). "They'll never catch me, Jimmy," he boasts with a boyish twinkle in his eye, "I'm too fast for them." And Jimmy, who up until this point in the story has seemed oblivious to the people and events around him, now laughs – genuinely, loudly.

When Fusi returns to Bethel House the morning after his outing with Jimmy, he learns that his friend has died during the night. As he stands in the kitchen of the institution, deeply shaken by the news, his daughter Emma enters, obviously relishing her mission. The spiteful words with which she assaults her father shatter the self-protective illusion that had once allowed him to declare adamantly, in response to her reference to the old-folk's home, "I am not one of them." She says, coldly, "I called the inspectors," and adds triumphantly: "They've known about your fishing all along... They watch for you every morning in case you get into trouble and need some help."

In terms of the film's structure and theme, it is significant that Fusi's spiritual wounding at the hand of his callous daughter should coincide with his learning of Jimmy Henderson's death. Emma's words, after all, strike a death-knell not only to Fusi's perception of "manhood" (as narrow as that may be) but to his personal myth-making. For even though Fusi had managed to remain outside the walls of Bethel House and so apparently retain his dignity as an adult, he has now (by the steely words of his daughter, and as surely as his mute and helpless friend) been stripped of his manhood. Furthermore, he has now been stripped of his boyhood, his playful romanticism, his prankish slyness, his ability to organize threats against Emma's rigid, religious grip on things. His allusive, subtle "God is not a fish inspector" is snuffed out with her blunt, literal "you can't do any damage with just one net" and her final bit of verbal weaponry, "the Lord's will be done."

If life is like a poker game – to take an oft-repeated statement from

Waiting for Morning,[2] Kroeker's documentary about the material of **God is Not a Fish Inspector** – the stakes are never precisely defined for the principal characters in Kroeker's narrative films. Fusi Bergman's struggle to preserve his right to use and keep his fishing net and his boat is a vain one, not because he loses at this level, but because the powers who govern these physical trappings of his identity have ironically determined to be indulgent, to turn a blind eye to the old man's illegal but inconsequential self-amusements. Fusi loses because he fails to recognize the nature of the game he is playing, the identity of the players, and the stakes which are not only different from but much higher than he is willing or able to admit. Accordingly, his loss does not take the predicted form. That is, he suffers not merely the apparently threatened loss of license, net, and boat (a loss which would, in any case, only be part of a game he can understand, and turn into anecdote and personal myth), but he is abruptly stripped of illusion, an illusion providing him with his idea of dignity, self-worth, even of his boyish role as "a man."

The theme of betrayal rooted in the shattering of a character's self-illusion is evident in Kroeker's earliest narrative film, a short, eleven-minute adaptation of Tolstoy's story, **How Much Land Does a Man Need ?** The story, as Kroeker tells it, is presented without Tolstoy's progressively-defined deceiver: the devil cum muzhik cum peddler cum head-hunter of the Bashkirs cum kibitka is pragmatically collapsed into the sole figure of the land-owner (whose costume is, incidentally, reminiscent of that of Death in Bergman's **Seventh Seal**).

The land-owner, as the agent of calculated, pre-meditated betrayal, is presented neither (as he is in Tolstoy's story) as a projection of the devil himself nor (as in the tale within the tale of the original) merely as a figment of the the traveller's unconscious world of dream. He is a physical being who in the few acts he undertakes is deftly developed into the agent of disillusion and death.

While the traveller – imagining that he is extending his own future holdings – increases the dimensions of his circular journey, the land-owner (in the film) foreshadows the traveller's end by creating a grave-maker cross of the traveller's crook, and drawing concentric circles with his stick in the sand to suggest the traveller's irrevocable movement toward death. The villainous scheming of the land-owner is projected most forcefully, perhaps, through the series of close-ups of faded red ribbons marking areas of land presumably circumscribed at earlier times by earlier unwitting victims of the land-owner. The audience in this stylized, parable-like film with its formal, objective, voice-over narrator is thus made explicitly aware of the irony surrounding the traveller's blind ambition. Like all Kroeker's protagonists, whose determined drive to actualize their own myths of self has both propelled them forward and blinded them to the reality of their condition, the traveller has been defeated from the very beginning.

Typical of Kroeker's narrative structures, there is, in **How Much Land Does a Man Need ?,** betrayal, and a blurring of its agents. Tolstoy's – and Kroeker's – traveller is not merely self-deceived ; he is in fact preyed upon by some ubiquitous human force acting within his environment – a force that epitomizes the very complexity of living that Kroeker's elemental characters refuse to acknowledge.

In **Capital,** a psychologically more ambitious and dramatically more subtle film than **God is Not a Fish Inspector,** Kroeker's theme is again given form : here, Abel Shizter (much like Fusi Bergman, who outwits fish inspectors) dupes rough loggers who periodically come down from the north into town to cash their pay-cheques and buy beer. Kroeker alters the original text by fleshing out the character of Shizter's son, young Billy Boy. By the end of the story Billy, who is a kind of apprentice to his con-man father, has (with echoes here of Emma, in relation to her father, Fusi Bergman) power over his father. It is power subtly and inevitably insinuated, growing out of the real power Billy actually controls throughout the story. After all, it is he who is responsible for overhauling the radios that allow Shizter to sell the bandaged and dressed cars from which he makes his capital. "You can always tell a good car by the tone of the radio" is one of Shizter's practised lines : "Poor radios are a signal that you're getting a poor car." He continues : "They might be able to disguise a poor motor or transmission... but the radio always gives them away." Shizter needs Billy's radio precisely for disguising the knocks in the engines of the briefly-revived machines he slyly pawns off on his gulls.

In expanding the role of Billy (especially at the end) in his version of Valgardson's story, Kroeker not only (as he puts it) "fleshes out what is ultimately an anecdote ;" he not only "provides a moral centre for the story," but also formulates yet another plot that reflects his views on self-deception and betrayal. As in **God Is Not a Fish Inspector,** the interlocking of the lives of the principal players takes on the character of a game in which power resides with him who is most adept at the efficient violation of trust – in **God Is Not a Fish Inspector,** an old man's daughter ; in **Capital,** an old man's son.

Kroeker's interest seems not so much to be in the mechanics of betrayal itself as in the nature of the character who invites the breach of trust. This is undoubtedly why **Capital,** in its literary form, struck him as a mere anecdote.

The central characters in all three of these films are desperate men – by-and-large old men pre-occupied with attempting to order, control, and keep neatly packaged the myths central to their view of themselves in relation to the world. Fusi Bergman, for example, is absolutely obsessed with the activity of fishing, yet the audience knows that he does not need to fish to survive physically. He simply revels in the imagined naughtiness surrounding his psychically legitimate pleasure at involvement in his culture's centuries-old rituals – catching, filleting, and wrapping his fish – a naughtiness which sustains him in the face of his daughter's religiosity, reinforced by religious programming on tape-cassettes packaged in and imported from America. What Fusi collects is unimportant ; he does not even bother to eat what he has caught. Shitzter, in **Capital,** packages cars and verbal cliches ; the traveller in **How Much Land Does a Man Need ?** tries, with his ribbons, to package land.

For each of these men, their desperate need to have, or seem to have, some kind of control over their

The Traveller (left) and the Land-owner in ***How Much Land Does a Man Need?*** *(1978)*

own lives leads them to delineate and quantify their experiences compulsively, blindly, often in search of their own childhood, in search of freedom ; at least of life relieved of uncontrollable complexity.

Fusi's and Shizter's inevitable failure to make whole their fragmented experience is foreshadowed in the earlier film, **How Much Land Does a Man Need ?**, dramatically a much simpler film, of course, than **God Is Not a Fish Inspector** and **Capital.** In that film the only possible end to successful – if desperate – encasement of experience is literal death. Here in particular we see that life itself is shunned in favour of an elusive form designed to grip life according to a man-made pattern.

In **Capital,** even Billy Boy, the young protègé of the self-disenfranchising older man, refuses himself a pair of skates he has coveted for over a year and clings to the capital that, presumably, will never broaden or enrich his experience. Billy Boy's, too, is what can finally be regarded as a nihilistic vision similar to that of his elder, or elders.

Billy Boy's tricking his father is actually doubly ironic, as he uses the methods and materials of his father's game of deception/betrayal to introduce a game of his own. While the father might be able to accept a son who out-cons the con artist in the game of car radios and gulled buyers (just as Fusi Bergman can accept fish inspectors, or even a daughter, who might catch him at the superficial game of fishing illegally), Shizter loses his place as the indulgent pal/father who delights in overseeing or coaching his boy with savoured words such as, "Billy's got some business for you." Billy Boy causes Shizter to lose his place with his rhetoric, his language, his drawing delicate distinctions between "living money" and "capital". Shizter loses his place as the macho/boy's-best-friend who revels in rolling wisdom from his tongue in repeating often, "if you don't look after your own capital no one else will," or, "be patient, get everything ready, then wait to get what you want." Shizter does manage, however, a final attempt at reconciliation to his new, deflated role in his uneasy but outwardly exuberant closing cliché, "that's my boy."

In one sense, **Capital** and **God Is Not a Fish Inspector** are as much parables as the more explicitly didactic **How Much Land Does a Man Need ?.** The men's accumulations of fish, or land, or capital – all these products of their compulsion to control and sustain their visions of themselves – are slipped from them as easily as if they were children or simpletons, being robbed of a pocket possession by a sleight-of-hand thief.

The devastating impact on Kroeker's protagonists of normally unremarkable incidents is not out of keeping with the physical world his characters occupy, and the treatment of that world on the screen by Kroeker, who is himself a cinematographer. A deserted piece of land sharply cut off from the rest of civilization by water provides the particularly surrealistic setting in **How Much Land Does a Man Need ?** A lonely shack (in **The Tudor King),** or prairie towns insulated – except for radios, or tape-recorder cassettes with a preacher's course from "Mobile, Alabama" – from outside influences and loosely encircled by farms or homesteads starkly braced against the prairie sky : all these pared-down elements of setting, reduced to the blunt outlines of the parable form, define or confirm the nature of experience in Kroeker's world, a world sometimes of actual silhouettes separate from modulating, nuanced, fluid environment. The sound-over of wind at the end of **Capital** or of the waves at the opening of **God Is Not a Fish Inspector** only reinforces the elemental, even primitive, quality of the environment of Kroeker's work.

The tautly visualized world which Kroeker's characters occupy is a region of absolutes, of extremes, of hard, defiant, repetitive acts. Typical in this world are the terse, forceful, cutting statements of "The Lord's will be done," "God will punish you," "you have no right," "a man who learns to wait always gets what he wants." It is a world of irreversible dictums and policies : "Thou shalt not lend thy money for interest nor sell thy food for profit ;" and "I don't take two-party cheques. Never have." Such proverbial sayings are, here, not illuminations, of course ; they are weapons, giving the bare world a claustrophobic atmosphere in which characters spend a great deal of time secretly watching each other, or being watched by invisible witnesses.

In so rigid and neurotic an environment a man rises or falls, wins or loses by virtue of a mere gesture that elsewhere might easily be absorbed as inconsequential in a broad stream of complexly interrelated activities.

Critical discussion of literature of the Canadian west has long ago acknowledged the prairie as a state of mind, to use Henry Kreisel's phrase. The definitive actions of

Kroeker's characters – like the landscape itself – are isolated, isolating, unrelenting. But lack of complexity does not in the end make life simple. Like figures against a prairie sky, the words and actions of Kroeker's people loom disproportionately large in a fictional world in which, as Fusi Bergman remarks, life "comes with no warranties."

Risk to the inner self is constant and unmitigated, with the rules of life always shifting. And Kroeker's characters invariably lose at games that are not the ones they thought they were playing. They are used to the high definition and strict rules that accompany the highly structured tiny societies in which they operate. Their pathological self-deception, which is their downfall, is precisely related to this. Life is inevitably a stage more complex than they had acknowledged. The variables are not controllable, however simple and controllable they seem to be. In **How Much Land Does a Man Need?** the shift from simpler to subtler rules is marked by the metamorphosis of the traveller's walking-stick into a cross; for the audience, the summary of the traveller's self-deception – a metaphor for the self-deception of Fusi and Shizter – is provided, finally, in the image of the prostrate traveller crawling toward the cross, marking the little grave-plot he has acquired within the surrounding, witnessing vastness of mocking water and prairie sky.

Wilfrid Laurier University

Notes

1/ The six films are: from Tolstoy, **How Much Land Does a Man Need?** (Woodland Films, Winnipeg, 1978; 11 minutes); from Wiebe, **Tudor King** (NFB, 1979; 10 minutes); and from Valgardson, **God Is Not a Fish Inspector** (Manitoba Department of Education, 1980; 28 minutes), **Capital** (NFB, 1980; 28 minutes), **The Catch** (CKND-TV, Winnipeg, 1981; 25 minutes), and **The Pedlar** (NFB, 1982; about 60 minutes).

2/ **Waiting for Morning** (Manitoba Department of Education, 1981; 30 minutes) is a documentary study of author W.D. Valgardson, with emphasis on Kroeker's adaptation of Valgardson's **God Is Not a Fish Inspector.**

New Information Technologies and the University

by Bill Nichols

How will new information technologies affect the structure and function of higher education in our society? New developments like word-processing, computer-aided instruction, electronic data bases, computer networks, powerful stand-alone microcomputers, programmable videodiscs, and interactive television systems like Telidon portend of massive changes in the next decade or so. Already thousands of primary and secondary school teachers have joined organizations concerned with the educational impact of computers, and various governmental studies have attempted to assess the potential impact of the new technologies on education as well as on the job market, foreign trade, culture, and other areas. No one doubts that there will be an impact, but few can yet foretell exactly what that impact will be. The following remarks are an attempt to suggest what some of the areas of significant impact are likely to be.

New information technologies promise to do many things faster and cheaper than they could be done by other means, but will they do them more wisely? Will they provide solutions to the problems of environmental depletion and degradation, of recession and inflation, unemployment and reduced social services, of international peace and nuclear safety, and of the quality of everyday life from public safety to mass entertainment? No doubt these technologies, often proposed as messianic solutions, will instead be both problem and solution, restructuring the relations of power and control within society; in fact, restructuring society itself as the railway and the automobile have done before them.

No social forecast of the impact of new technologies can be complete without a theory of power – of how and why it arises, of when it is benign or necessary and when dangerous or oppressive. Social theorists since Plato have puzzled over mankind's propensity for hierarchical relations; no society can do without them, it would seem, but to this day no one can claim to understand them fully. New information technologies may contribute to a shift in power, creating a class division between the knows and the know-nots, but its effect will be within a nexus of pre-existing social and economic relations. In fact, the very capital-intensive nature of most new information technology makes it very likely that it will be a product of the largest concentrations of capital now available: the monopolies, multi-nationals and federal governments. The consumer products that issue forth may be affordable to many, but the technology, facilities, and manpower needed to produce them will remain available to very few indeed. The central issues we will have to face arise in the marketplace and will revolve around the consumer.

The heightening of a tendency to turn more and more to secondary, or vicarious, experience as our primary and often sole form of experience is one such issue. In some ways this phenomenon can be traced back to the 19th century and the imperialist tradition, particularly to the creation of the botanical garden and the zoo. The zoo stands as a vivid analogy for what new information technologies promise: the zoo brings back alive evidence of a world we would not otherwise know, but now under our apparent control. Unlike the role of vicarious experience in the arts, the zoo does not train our sensibilities for an enriched or enhanced encounter with that which it represents. Instead it replaces it. The zoo **becomes** our way of understanding nature and wild life, even though the very form of presentation radically transforms the very thing it represents. This is quite analogous to what has happened to a wide range of experience in an age of mass media, whether we consider fictional or non-fictional forms. We have the soap opera as substitute for the extended family and the evening news as replacement for the town crier. None could say there has not been a gain through the multiplication of such secondary forms of experience, if we continue to compare them to those more primary forms of experience they potentially replace, but few have begun to consider the risk of loss that has also followed and that new technologies promise to make still greater.

One clear element of risk is that of a new formalism. Many may become enamoured of the rules of the game that apply in the abstracted realm of secondary experience. Many may prefer the sense of pleasure and mastery that can be had at the turn of a dial or the flick of a switch. Computers, like television, can be addicting. And when used to generate models of how we live, or ought to live, be it in fictional enactments or

economic modelling, some may become more entranced with the power and perfection of their models than with the gamut of human emotions that will accompany the application of such models to real life. That many will find and seek pleasure and profit in such forms of experience-at-a-remove tells us a great deal about the intractibility and anonymity of our existing social relations, but it may do very little to overcome them. That, in turn, may become a problem of quite profound dimensions.

The university is often regarded as somehow apart from these contentious issues. It exists in a time and space of its own, somewhat sequestered, working on puzzles and problems that address longer term issues, the ones society as a whole may not yet perceive and the ones that only a small fraction of society can find time to attack. This, though, is an out-of-date image. It bears little relation to the modern university which, instead of being somewhat apart from the currents in contemporary society, is itself directly in the thick of them. This is true both of the research and teaching that occurs (though it may still have a longer range perspective than the next quarterly statement), and of the very conception of the university as an institution.

The last ten years or so have seen a remarkable shift in the metaphors used to describe the university. Instead of the cloister or monastery, instead of the contemplative life of critical inquiry, instead of a place where the mind is trained and the soul cultivated, the university has become a business. Not literally, yet, but metaphorically. By a process of self-selection those who administer the modern university are, on the whole, those who are most comfortable with this metaphor and who seek to perpetuate it. They speak of "system rationalization," and "cost-effectiveness". They become excited about how new information technologies will increase faculty "productivity" (rather than quality) ; they preside over a system where productivity, merit salary increases, promotion and tenure are often decided in quantitative terms. Simultaneous references to quality and excellence are what they are in business : rhetorical devices supported to the degree necessitated by competition and other market forces and limited in any case by the bottom line : no standard of quality can be upheld if it means operating at a loss. The professor who devotes so much time to his teaching that his or her research suffers is not dedicated, but inefficient. New information technologies will help eliminate such inefficiency.

Given the tendency to adopt a business metaphor for the university (one reason why, by the way, university spokesmen are often hard put to explain such unbusinesslike practices as sabbaticals and tenure), it is not surprising that many university administrators see new information technologies as no less a panacea than do many businessmen. What they and the rest of the university community need, like the rest of society, is a little more of the traditional backbone of the university : critical detachment. These technologies will be of enormous value to institutions as well as individuals if used wisely, but if embraced willy-nilly, they may work to further erode some of the traditional characteristics of the university that I and many others suspect are very poorly served by the analogy of education as a business.

In fact, new information technologies and their proliferation will bring to sharper focus the need for two new literacies to supplement our historical reliance on verbal literacy. We now live and will increasingly live in a culture characterized and dominated by the image and the computer. New technologies like satellite television, Telidon, pay-television and videogames, will only increase the obviousness of this fact. Much of our secondary experience arrives in visual form, be it the evening news or the feature film. How visual discourse operates to convey meanings and values often appears obvious, but seldom is entirely so. Vast sums are spent in advertising for precisely this reason. If it were a simple or ineffective method, such expenditure would not be necessary. The enormous importance of advertising tells us something indirectly about the power of the image, and independent research into the use of mental imaging in athletic competition and of visual thinking in all forms of creativity only increase the evidence that it is most essential that we have a sound understanding of visual language and its properties.

That the bulk of new information technologies also facilitate the processing of information of any type by various forms of machine intelligence also makes it imperative that we be computer-literate. A person may be told what a book says, be shown, via television news, what happened in the world, or be given information via a computer data base and still remain illiterate. Literacy requires **an ability to understand and use** a particular means of communication to desired effect. The visually literate person can comprehend a book on his or her own and communicate his or her own thoughts in clear prose. The visually literate person can comprehend how news or drama is aesthetically, rhetorically and ideologically structured as well as create and organize images to convey his or her own thoughts effectively. The computer-literate person can comprehend the basic structure, function and limitations of computers and use such devices to process, store, or communicate thoughts of his or her own. All three of these literacies are desirable skills now ; in the future they will become indispensable.

One simple reason for this, apart from the proliferation of image-based communications and computer technology, is that these forms of communication will transform the very shape of our culture itself. Culture includes not only works of high artistic merit but also the works of popular culture and the rituals of everyday life (conversation, music, sport, dress, games, and so on) ; in short, the forms in which social relationships manifest themselves. New information technologies will clearly affect the shape of culture itself. This is a crucial point. It is analogous to the difference between saying that television **reflects** social relationships (in its depiction of violence or the rank consumerism of its advertisements, for example) and saying that television **constitutes** a social relationship (based on isolation within the home, secondary experience and viewer passivity). Once again, visual and computer literacy will become indispensable to an individual's ability to understand and participate in his or her own culture.

Universities can certainly help

provide such literacy but they will do so within a specific context. Most generally, this will be the development and growth of new information technologies in society at large. More specifically, it will involve the impact of these technologies on the primary and secondary education system. Their impact at this level can be expected to be both more rapid and more widespread as ministries of education orient considerable resources towards the goal of computers in every school and computer time for every child. Most university-level entrants will come to have increasingly greater expectations about the accessibility and application of new information technologies to their field of study, whatever it may be. The result may be similar to that of French immersion programs in Ontario in which students have studied various disciplines in French and expect to continue to do so at university – except that the impact will be even greater.

In the years ahead, universities will have to address five major needs prompted by the impact of new information technologies. These are 1) the need to support teaching and research pertaining to new information technologies and related topics as an area of specialization, a need which may eventually give rise to new departments and combinations of disciplines, 2) the need to insure visual and computer literacy among all students as a general, educational principle, which may be the spearhead of a drive for a new core curriculum, 3) the need to utilize new information technologies for teaching and research across a wide spectrum of disciplines through computer-aided instruction (CAI) or data base access, for example, 4) the need to apply new information technologies to the administration of the university as an institution through such things as computerized record-keeping and electronic mail, and 5) the need to consider possible changes in the structure and function of the university in the years ahead as the very context in which higher education takes place undergoes significant change. This need deserves some further attention as the most potentially explosive.

Our educational institutions serve both an educational and a socializing function. In the lower years the socializing function plays an extremely central role as children learn how to cooperate, to respect authority, and to accept many of the basic assumptions operating in our society. For this very reason it is unlikely that computers will radically alter the basic organization of primary and secondary schools even though they have the potential to do so. (Much of the hard learning that takes place can be expected to become available on videodiscs and computer software programs.) The social investment in the school is so great that there will be enormous inertia confronting any truly radical change in the school as we know it.

This is less true of the university. Universities represent the most selective form of education. Their very lack of universality makes their form and function less vital as a socializing instrument: the social lessons taught here, indirectly, cannot be of universal importance to our society or they would remain unlearned by a large percentage of the population. Instead the socializing process is more closely associated with particular kinds of careers and professions that are normally dominated by university graduates. This is what will make the university particularly vulnerable to radical change based on new information technologies. Such technologies could broaden the social base from which degree candidates will come by means of their economy and widespread availability. Earning a degree at home may become commonplace. New forms of socializing experience may arise to replace on-campus residence and although many, including myself, may argue that something very central to the university experience will be lost if face-to-face learning is lost, questions of economy may nonetheless prevail.

Already some major American publishers have marketed complete course packages to university instructors or departments. These packages include texts, videotapes or videodiscs, computer-aided instruction, and computerized record keeping and testing. The individual instructor need do little more than manage the system while benefiting from a high-quality package that may draw on the best resources and professionals available in order to capture a large share of the market.

Such course packages will be initially aimed at very large university courses (they are already available in psychology and political studies), but they will no doubt proliferate and include most university areas within the next decade. The vast majority of such packages, in English Canada, will be American in origin, a point which may give us extra reason to consider the importance of some of the already existing buffer institutions, such as TV Ontario, that could also marshall resources on the scale necessary to compete on quantitative and qualitative grounds. Provincial co-ordination of post-secondary education may become more and more of a cultural imperative, questions of economy and so-called "system rationalization" aside. Whether sufficient foresight exists, for once, to build up an adequate buffer against American intrusion into a vital cultural and economic activity, will be a question of considerable importance in the years ahead.

Existing educational institutions are a logical starting point for course packaging since they form a ready-make market. But the most significant change will arise when such course packages are readily available in the home market. "Courses" in all basic subjects may become available at local book-stores or computer shops ; they may be available through the mail from corporations like Texas Instruments or McGraw-Hill or Exxon. They may arrive inside the home on two-way television systems like Telidon or via satellite links with universities-of-the-air that may consist of little more than a central computer, a transmitter and a large store of educational courseware. Such courses may cost more than the average textbook but they will cost much, much less than a year at university. Universities may continue to administer or coordinate such home-marketed material, conferring degrees or certificates upon individuals who select courses of suitable standard, achieve a certain level of competence, and perhaps include a specified period of on-campus residence. At worst, universities may become the equivalent of a Consumer's Union, reporting on the quality of various educational products as a guide to the concerned shopper, while re-

maining faculty devote themselves to research and, in all likelihood, mainly short-term contract research.

The current power and authority of the university may be seriously eroded. Alternatively, if universities remain in the forefront of the development of alternative educational practices, their prestige may grow accordingly. Those who do control the new forms of higher education will certainly enjoy considerable prestige, if not profitability. The incentives will be high and we can clearly expect a great many new players in the post-secondary educational sweepstakes.

Changes of this magnitude, though possible, will not occur overnight. Leadership will come from those who have experienced and comprehended such changes most fully, and this will no doubt include those universities that actively explore new forms of undergraduate education extensively and monitor the results carefully. Clearly, the very possibility of changes of this extent will prompt universities to rethink once again the nature and purpose of a university education and, particularly, how it can be differentiated from alternatives that approximate more and more closely the characteristics, if not yet the quality, of the traditional undergraduate curriculum.

In summary, what changes can we expect to see in higher education in the years to come? We will see students who, ironically, often will have a greater degree of visual and computer literacy than their professors. Their expectations will pose serious questions about the availability of such things as word-processing or data base searches, particularly the question, Who pays? At present it only seems clear that no one answer is evident. In terms of data base access both the federal and provincial governments have openly encouraged their greater use, verbally, but have made no provision to offset the cost, which can run between $15 and $100 per search. Universities themselves have seen their operating budgets shrink every year for the last five years or so as new funds go primarily to keep salaries not too far below the rate of inflation. Students will be uneager to assume yet another ancillary expense, and faculty may wonder what impact this will have on the traditional apprenticeship system of graduate assistants who often perform such data searches by hand as one of the service activities they perform in exchange for financial stipends.

Adult education in all its forms can be expected to burgeon. With satellite linkages and computer networks there may well arise super-universities equivalent to superstations in the television entertainment sector. Universities need no longer concentrate on providing distance education for those within their immediate geographic area; it will be entirely possible for a university to offer extension services to students scattered across the country or even the continent. This will put greater pressure on universities to identify areas of strength and to nurture them, lest funding for these areas begin to flow elsewhere to a disproportionate degree.

The rise of course packaging by means of interactive computer programs will also mark a radical change in the basic nature of higher education, should it occur to any sizeable extent. Historically, higher education has been served by an identifiable institution within our society, the university. Like the hospital, school and courts, it is a repository of values and knowledge that the rest of society depends upon. New information technologies and the entrance of powerful economic forces into this area, however, mean that higher education may take on more and more the characteristics of a market rather than an institution. The educational marketplace will be characterized, initially, by furious competition, possibly by strenuous and perhaps misleading advertising, and by problems of quality as the classic tension between profitability and excellence makes itself felt as a major constraint. Education itself may become more and more of a secondary experience as face-to-face contact with an instructor is replaced by long hours in front of a video display terminal.

The concentration of resources needed to mount a successful telecourse or CAI package will require educators to work in teams and consortia to an increasing degree. The individual instructor, unless he or she is exceptionally good, will be hard put to compete with the instructional programs developed by teams of the very best professionals money can buy. The academic's traditional privacy within the classroom will come under siege, not by prying administrators, but by competing educational "product." The notions of academic freedom and tenure as they apply to the classroom may suffer considerable erosion and the rich spectrum of differences in approach represented by a university faculty may become narrowed down to a few marginally different approaches, something like car models, in which distinctive points of view will be flattened out by consensus decision-making.

National, regional and cultural studies may also come under siege as higher education becomes more of a market, subject to the same market forces as other commodities. Buffers to the "freedom of information" advocated by those who control the bulk of information and constraints on transborder data flow will become of increasing importance. In some ways the impact of new information technologies on education may be tantamount to Custer's Last Stand for questions of national sovereignty and cultural identity. It's do or die; and if it's die, few will remain to remember the nation that might have been.

Within the educational marketplace there will be a mix of sunrise industries such as electronics, computer programming, artificial intelligence, and cultural programming and some sunset industries, educational equivalents to Lockheed and Chrysler. To a large degree these sunset industries will be found among the humanities. The wisdom of supporting them rather than those in their ascendancy will be hotly debated. Arguments about tradition and quality will wear thin. And as much as I personally suspect that the very idea of the university will change, profoundly, and for the worse, I also wonder if this change is not to some extent inevitable. Humanities departments took their place at the centre of the university when their disciplines were perceived as central to the making of an educated individual. The new literacies dilute the claim of the classic humanities departments. The battle is no longer over whether to admit English literature to the curriculum, as it was at the turn of the century, or even film, as it was in

the sixties. There is a growing lack of intuitive support and basic sympathy for the humanities among those who administer our universities and among those attracted to these brave new institutions. Business and art have always existed in uneasy relationship to one another and as the university-as-a-business analogy has gained in prominence, the ability of institutional rhetoric and administrative practice to accomodate or defend the humanities has diminished correspondingly. New information technologies make it possible to increase our access to our cultural traditions, but the existing patterns of economic priority and mass culture suggest that the reverse may be more likely and that the average citizen's everyday life will be lived at even more of a remove from the traditions and values preserved by the humanities.

This, of course, can be seen as a challenge as well as a threat to the humanities. As our very conception of culture alters, the humanities can play a central role in helping to redefine and evaluate that change. As demand for visual and computer literacy grows, the humanities can play a vital part in seeing to it that literacy includes some sense of critical ability and discerning judgment. Humanists proclaim a concern with the best and most enduring qualities of man; new information technologies and their impact may put that claim to the test in the arena of contemporary culture. Rather than assuming that the best belongs to the past and that a moral sensibility can only be honed with the unimpassioned distance afforded by history, the humanities will be challenged to discover the best within the present and to identify the ethical dimension of issues and problems that confront us today. The development of the field of biomedical ethics and some recent studies into the forms of modern popular culture suggest that this is far from impossible, and of great value when achieved. Whether there is enough flexibility and vision within humanities departments for these supplemental concerns to flourish or not will be one of the acid tests for the late twentieth-century university. It is also a vivid example of how new information technologies will pose both problems and solutions. Evaluating the nature of the problems and the quality of the solutions will be one of our greatest challenges in the years to come.

Queen's University

Film and the Future: Changes in Film Viewing Situations, and their Implications

by David Poole

This paper will be a speculative look at the way the contexts in which films are viewed may change what films are about, who they are seen by and, to some extent, their forms. I'll be concentrating on two main areas – the effect of television home viewing on film and the way that specialty film audiences are changing film content and form.

I'll begin by explaining why I think TV will soon act as more than a delivery system for old material (as it has for most of its history to date). My moment of illumination came when watching an Intellevision commercial in which George Plimpton lauded the virtues of "Space Invaders", a video game that has a simulated 3-D bombing run on an alien planet in a sequence lifted straight from the climactic scenes of **Star Wars.** The commercial reinforced ideas I was developing about the birth of new attitudes to the television screen which are, in turn, giving rise to new film forms as audiences demand – and are capable of getting – an increasingly interactive role with the material they are shown. This new role goes beyond the interaction possible on present video games to a point at which the "realism" of cinema is combined with the control that video/computer inputs allow.

Before trying to predict how current viewing practices will affect films, it may be useful to briefly outline the traditional practice of film viewing and to bring out some of the more obvious features of that practice; features that are undergoing fairly radical change. The standardization of film lengths at 60-90 minutes and the creation of theatres that were intended exclusively for film screenings led to the "classic" viewing situation that appears to have been in force until the late '40s. In this configuration, audience attention was completely directed toward a screen and, as much as possible, conditions were arranged to try to keep the audience from becoming self-conscious. The audiences for these screenings were traditionally drawn from a cross-section of the population, film attendance was frequent, and if you missed a film on its first run, there was a chance you could see it in a second-or third-run house.

The introduction of broadcast TV in the late '40s – TV's First Wave – resulted in a number of changes that modified but did not substantially change the relationship between the viewer and the filmic material. Primarily, the mass audience began to fragment into a spectrum of specialized audiences based initially on age. The drive-in market developed and reinforced a 'teen audience, while the viewers for spectacular films were drawn from an older group of filmgoers for whom film attendance was becoming more and more a "special event" rather than a weekly occurrence. Another group was delineated by devotees of foreign and 'art' films, which were gaining increasingly significant audiences in North America. It was suggested by such viewers that certain films deserved repeated viewings and so rep houses were established where a film could be viewed and re-viewed over a relatively long time period. The dominant viewing strategy for 'art' films moved away from the theatrical model to the model of the novel or the museum piece, both of which could be returned to and discussed in the terms reserved for 'serious' art.

The Second Wave of TV was distinguished by a number of trends – each precipitating an increasingly diversified use of the home TV screen. In the late '60s and early '70s widespread conversion to colour broadcasting and the increased number of channels available on the UHF band expanded the technical range of materials that could be transmitted by TV signal. This, coupled with the continuing installation of cable TV services fed from satellites (as in the U.S.) or refeeding signals from outside normal reception range (as in Canada), led to a greater potential for the diversification of programming on TV. In effect, TV began to repeat some of the recent history of cinema, as more and more channels became available, each with the potential to reach a distinct and narrowly defined audience. Of late, the term "narrowcasting" has become popular to describe the phenomenon of programming for a very limited audience group (either by transmitting at extremely low power or by limiting the material broadcast to appeal to a very distinct group). When combined with the pay-TV establishments, the number and diversity of channels open to TV viewers creates possibilities for the targeting of programs that were previously not possible even on film.

Another major trend of the '70s has been the increasing acceptance of video-recording and playback machines. With the proliferation of

the machines has been an concurrent expansion of tape-rental outlets to supply material. The extent to which film will have to adapt to feed the market available on cable and playback units is perhaps best illustrated by noting that, in 1983, cable and video film rentals will account for five hundred million dollars – almost half of the $1.2 billion in annual revenues from the U.S. domestic theatrical rental of films. However, before outlining the implications of playback units on film form, I want to explore in more detail the variety of ways in which the home-TV screen can be used and the extent to which these various uses are becoming funneled, in their actual applications, into the corporate structures of organizations in the U.S. By suggesting the extent to which corporations are economically committed to systems that combine the video screen and computer technology, I hope to reinforce my contention that future viewers will demand a more active role as spectators than is the case in film viewing.

At the moment in the U.S., a video screen can be used as any of the following: a receiver of TV signals (broadcast, cable, or satellite), a video playback monitor, a screen for a video game, a monitor for a home computer, videotex or teletex, and as part of a two-way link to utilities and retail markets. Considering first the various modes of reception of TV signals, the mere bulk of TV signal sources now available allows for the creation of a large number of highly individualized messages, tailored to particular demographic groups of smaller and smaller size. The history of a shared film culture is fading rapidly in North America, especially as systems such as Behaviourscan make it possible for cable operators to determine, by a two-way hook-up with viewers, what it is about programs that most attracts them. Yet even while the possibility of creating completely 'targeted' films is becoming more real, the actual potential for diversity and selectivity of film production and programming may be less than it appears. To some extent, this is predicated on the volume of material that would have to be created to meet every specialized audience that is available. Although it is relatively easy to increase the channels of distribution of film material tenfold, a much larger commitment of energy and finances must be made even to double production capacity. The difficulty of producing specialized new material is one of the explanations for the fact that, although some areas in the U.S. and Canada can receive up to 38 channels on cable, the actual number of differing programs is often in the range of eight.

The fact that a large number of channels are in the hands of relatively few corporations also contributes to uniformity of programming. Yet it is not just the control of a range of program sources that is new; the integration of video programming and other services that can be delivered on video screens is of greater note. For example, Time Inc. is the U.S.'s largest cable system operator, but it also owns and operates a major pay-TV network – Home Box Office – plus the Behaviourscan systems noted earlier. The Warner/Amex coalition of Warner Communications and American Express controls another cable system plus test systems of two-way cable (QUBE), for which Amex is geared up to do the billing and to initiate home shopping. Atari home video games and computers are yet another part of the Warner/Amex group. The second largest cable systems operator in the United States is Teleprompter – owned by Westinghouse – which is currently buying satellite space even though it does not have programs available to broadcast on the satellites. Perhaps the most surprising integration of industries is IBM's control of MCA's Discovision, a laser disc system. Another U.S. corporate giant, Sears Roebuck, has a video catalogue available on which, in conjunction with a home computer, an individual display page can be called up and read. This is not meant to be a "strange new world" indictment of corporate maneuvering but simply an underlining of the extent to which corporations already perceive the various activities that can be performed on a video screen as a continuum. Unlike the theatrical film screen, which had only one function – to reflect the information that was shone upon it – the TV screen is seen increasingly as a personalized display of material that can be repeated, manipulated, scanned, responded to and acted upon. A story in the June 3, 1982 edition of "The Globe and Mail" reinforces my contention that all video services are seen as similar:

> "Home computers and other types of consumer electronics are the biggest threat to the health of the cable television industry, says a U.S. expert on cable and computer technology. They are a threat because they sell entertainment and information, the same sort of products offered by cable television operators, said Howard Anderson, president of the Yankee Group of Boston, a consulting company... Rather than compete directly with groups such as Atari, cable companies should exploit the new technology, pick up every viable stream and not count on selling entertainment solely, Mr. Anderson told members of the Canadian Cable Television Association at their annual meeting. The same idea was propounded by John Kelly, chairman of Nabu Manufacturing Corp. of Ottawa. Nabu has $60-million in sales annually. It has developed a home micro-computer that hooks up to cable television and provides both video games and information. Mr. Kelly said video games will be a $6 billion industry in North America this year, whereas the movie business will gross only $3 billion. He noted that it took the movie industry 70 years to produce a blockbuster such as Star Wars, which earned $385 million. It took the video game industry only five years to produce Pac Man, which has earned $400 million."

As more and more material becomes available on the TV screen, I suggest that the boundaries between what is to be dealt with passively (film material) and what is to be manipulated (video/computer information) will blur, and increasing demands will be made by viewers to be able to deal actively with all material that appears on a video screen. The earliest access to a technology which allowed viewers to manipulate screen imagery came with the widespread introduction of video playback units in the mid'70s. With the simultaneous spread of

retail outlets renting libraries of videotapes, it became possible for viewers to re-view certain films relatively inexpensively and to see films in circumstances substantially different from theatrical settings. First, the social aspect of film viewing is absent since, at most, the videotape is shown to a family or to a small group. As playback units are still relatively expensive and novel, the specialness of viewing may still exist, but the extent to which the presence of an audience influences the form or content of films is clearly diminished. Thus far in film history, the genres that have been most dependent on a social viewing situation have been comedies, in which allowances for audience laughter must be made at the editing stage, and horror which depends in large part on the presence of an audience to amplify shock effects. Although comedy forms a significant part of standard TV broadcasting, it has been felt necessary to add laugh tracks to induce the feeling of the presence of an audience. Horror, on the other hand, has stayed almost exclusively within a theatrical context – even as detective, romance, adventure and other genres have been successfully transferred to video. Thus, the casualness of attention and isolation characteristic of television viewing is likely to become even more influential in shaping film content and form.

A more tangible effect on film content may result from the increasingly analytic possibilities inherent in a playback technology. Beside allowing for repeated viewings of entire films, playback units make it possible to analyse sequences frame-by-frame, in slow motion, in reverse, and to hold on individual frames. Video playback technology allows for the kind of filmic deconstruction that modernist critics and artists have been proposing for the better part of this century. Previously, this kind of analytic approach to film was available only to football coaches, film teachers, and Super-8 home-movie enthusiasts. Not only do people now have the technical capacity to subject films to analysis, they have a set of models to guide them in their analysis – in particular the instant-replay sections from live sports coverage. Laser disc technolgy also provides a way of taking the analytic approach a step farther, in that individual sections or frames can be addressed and then dialed up without having to scan an entire program. By calling up a series of shots using a computer allied with a laser disc, it is possible for viewers to take the shots of a film and re-edit or pace them as they wish. One step farther and we encounter a type of film that does not have any set structure. Instead, the "film" consists of a series of decision points at which the viewer chooses the shot that will appear next. (At the moment, the most advanced form of this kind of "filmmaking" consists of a kind of 1980's Hale's Tour, set up at MIT, in which various street scenes from Aspen, Colorado have been recorded. The viewer decides when or if he/she is going to turn down a selected street and the video screen shows a view of the street that has been selected, plus information on any of the buildings along the street that the viewer wishes to investigate.)

The other major control that viewers have over film screenings is to vary the actual amount of the film that is screened. Even given the "come-and-go" attitudes of film viewing in the '30s and '40s, it was always assumed that a viewer would see a film in its entirety. Now, given the fact that no extra payment is required to see sections of a film, there is no reason that films should be played all the way through. They may, in fact be rented or purchased only for individual sequences – as is doubtless the case in rentals of the movie **10.**

The implications of these possibilities for mass-audience films are the following. First, films produced for the mass market will have to adjust to repeat-view audiences. Practically, this is likely to have two main results. Films, though they will continue to be made for initial mass-marketing through theatres, will be classifiable in two categories – those meant to continue their mass-market penetration to the various TV delivery media, and others meant to focus on specific sub-audiences. Perhaps the more interesting phenomenon will be the increased targeting of product to distinct audiences. Just as PBS in the U.S. and C Channel in Canada have defined sets of viewer demographics, films may increasingly be made for very specific target groups that wish to have their values and interests reinforced. For the reasons that I mentioned earlier in the paper, the definition of markets is not likely to become as focussed as various proponents of "narrowcasting" are predicting, but the increased number of delivery systems will at least continue the trend toward differentiating audiences that began in the '50s and is evident today in the proliferation of multiplex cinemas.

The second result of the increased repeat-view audience will be the replacement of the type of narrative construction in which events build in complexity throughout the film, and are resolved at the end, by a style of episodic construction. For a number of reasons, sequences within the films may be set up to run as discrete units rather than as constituents of a unified plot. First, since these films will not be the market-specific types that I referred to earlier, they will likely be played on broadcast TV where they will have to compete against numerous other programs. As the TV dial is scanned, the chances of happening to catch viewers' attention is increased if the film is made up of a number of 'film-lets.' Secondly, a mosiac structure allows certain 'offending' sequences to be removed so that the film can be modified to suit targeted audiences without losing its meaning. Finally, it is unlikely that viewers will have the time to play back entire tapes, even if they own them. Rented tapes may well be played through in their entirety, but owned tapes are more likely to be dealt with the same way sound recordings are at present, with favourite cuts selected for review. The structure of **Raiders of the Lost Ark,** with its discrete action sequences, is likely to become more prevalent as the video market takes on a larger role in the marketing of films.

Continuing with the model from the recording industry, it appears likely that film theatres will, more and more, fill the kind of role in exhibition that radio stations and concerts play in the music business – that is, they will showcase new work for which the essential markets are the purchase or rental of recordings. The fate of the kinds of films that, in the '30s and '40s, were referred to as 'B' pictures is difficult to determine. They may continue to premiere theatrically and then try to find specific cable or playback

niches, or they may be introduced directly on a video format, avoiding the theatrical route altogether. Given the diversity of audiences and the capacity for analysis of difficult films, it may be possible for small or independent films to find sufficient support to be made in increased numbers. Just as homemade folk and jazz records have found a small corner in the recording industry, cheaply made independent films may finally be able to get at least limited exposure ; exposure that is largely denied them in current theatrical screening practice. In the same way, there is a potential for the production of more complex and dense film works, suitable for analysis on video playback apparatus and computer interactive machinery. I believe that such work will fall primarily into three categories : teaching systems, computer/video artworks, and video game/computer/film interfaces. Al Razutis has described a proposed hybrid of the first and second categories, involving laser discs and a computer which is coded to provide analysis of shots and scenes shown on the discs, and capable of calling up the appropriate analysis at whatever point the disc is stopped for examination. The third option is not as much of an Expo '67 or science-fiction concept as it seems – the Aspen tour disc is one manifestation that already exists. It is not impossible that increased memory capacities in both computer and image systems will allow viewers to act out roles in films – to make decisions via a computer and have the effects of their decisions shown on screen. Already, the video game industry provides game versions of popular films in which players are encouraged to identify with the protagonists of the films and to react appropriately to a series of events over which they have control ; hence the Raiders of the Lost Ark and E.T. games of the past year. The possibilities multiply when one introduces more than one "protagonist." A single player or a group could develop scenarios within guidelines provided by the film/game, in effect creating the film that they wanted to see acted out. The effects of this, combined with increasing targeting of films, could move film in the direction of reinforcing individual fantasies and away from its social role of creating collective myths.

As I said at the beginning of this paper, I first noticed the interpenetration of film and video/computer systems while watching a commercial for a video game based on a bombing run. I will end by nothing that the interpenetration appears to have extended. As the British Armed Forces approached the Falkland Islands, to prepare for invasion, seamen and fighter pilots left the electronic confines of their control centres and cockpits to rehearse and sharpen their reflexes by playing video battle-games. The next major world conflagration may well be "won" on the playing fields of Atari.

Is There a Future for a Quebec National Cinema?

by Réal LaRochelle

Last May (1982), two different events demonstrated, once again, the contradictions and tensions inherent in Quebec cinema.

On the one hand, there were the commercial releases of **Scandale**, a quickie film recalling the case of the alleged production of porn video in Quebec's National Assembly, and **Visiting Hours**, an American-style horror film whose credits include such prominent Québecers as Pierre David, Claude Héroux, and Jean-Claude Lord.

On the other, the **Front des travailleurs et travailleuses de la culture** held a demonstration called "Événément Showmage." Its purpose was to denounce budget cuts in the cultural sector and to decry aid policies that increasingly restrict creative access to a cultural élite.

The acute polarization between the commerce of culture and the democratization of cinematographic creation has recurred sporadically but repeatedly ever since the famous occupation of the Bureau de surveillance du cinéma (Censor Board) by Quebec filmmakers in 1974 – an occupation supported by marches in the streets with demonstrators chanting, "We want to make our own pictures" in front of Place des Arts.

Alain Corneau's recent short **La première chance (ou peut-être la dernière)** reminds us that these protests by Quebec filmmakers often convey the despair of a last chance. There were two other demonstrations in the summer of 1981: in June, a street screening on a white wall near the Cinémathèque Québécoise – an unusual open-air session – ended in a police scuffle ; and, in August, the "angry filmmakers" demonstration on the opening night of the Montreal World Film Festival.

The demands and the harsh tone of these demonstrations troubled the 1981 film year – the year of **Les Plouffe**, with its seven Genie awards, which has since become the yardstick of Canadian-Québécois cinéma, celebrated by the likes of Trudeau and Fox, as well as Clément Richard, Michel Vennat (former vice-president of the CFDC) and Gilles Ste. Marie of pay television's First Choice.

The total rejection of the "Plouffe" model – for many filmmakers a kind of continuing **"refus global"** —may be the last line of resistance of those who have been officially decried as a "gang", a mere "handful of angry Quebec filmmakers", as "shit disturbers", or even, in Jacques Hébert's words, as those "who create problems, when in Canada, compared to other countries, we have no problems."

Are we still fighting for a Quebec cinema?

In October 1980, during the 8e Semaine du cinéma québécois, several filmmakers declared that: "It is no longer a matter of being against American cinema or its derivatives, we must be FOR a national cinema." This surprising demand, after 25 years of Quebec cinema, forces us to consider whether recurring crises have made Quebec's national cinema terminally ill, or whether it does still have a future and, if so, what kind of future ?

The question of a viable future for a Quebec national cinema is a serious question – and not only for filmmaking Quebecers – especially at the dawn of a decade marked by the introduction of pay television and by financial as well as technical upheaval in the cultural industries. The question is also pertinent at a time when governments in Ottawa and Quebec are hastily putting together their "global" cultural policies (policies that do not promise to help the growth of a Quebec national cinema ; indeed, that are frankly harmful).

How then does the future look for a Quebec national cinema ? Undoubtedly there will be economic and technical adjustments to both the core of production and to the market. But these material adjustments can at best only be a means of situating the development of a national cinema. It is thus the meaning and the value of this underlying cultural nationalism that will characterize the future of the industry. That is why it is useful to closely examine the current contradictory notions surrounding the definition of a Quebec cinema, as well as attitudes towards its necessity and viability. I will try to provide an overview.[1]

On the threshold of the eighties, three trends appear in public opinion :

- the rejection of a national cinema ;
- the middle-of-the-road "compromise" that aims for the protection of certain national traits, while

advocating a rigourous renewal of the cinema through new, competitive, commercial competence;
- the defence of a popular, progressive national cinema.

These trends are far from being fully defined, as we will see. Nevertheless it seems that the first two options base themselves on an economic nationalism for the cultural industries to which social and cultural nationalism must align themselves as best they can.

Without denying the economic conditions of cinematic practice, the third option is above all concerned with social and cultural profitability, and continues in the tradition of Quebec cinema of the sixties, the cinema of the quiet revolution.

I. CULTURE IN THE CONTROL OF THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

"The year 1981 marks the most serious decline in film production in the past decade" announces the recent report of the Institut Québécois du cinéma (IQC).

The Institut conceived its Plan quinquennal d'aide (five-year financial assistance plan) in June 1981 under the sign of austerity, announcing that it would only grant assistance to films deemed financially viable (fiction being preferrable to the documentary feature), and suspending all assistance to medium-length fiction as well as to all short- and medium-length documentaries. This would leave only the tions Ltd., International Cinema Corporation, etc.
deny assistance to most young filmmakers attempting their first feature film, as well as to all those dedicated to an alternative, cultural or experimental cinema.

At the beginning of May, the IQC announced an even more selective assistance policy, accepting scripts by professionals only, "on the condition that they be associated with a production house and an experienced director"; production houses would be assessed according to specific criteria of financial management, production control, and capability of distribution.

But these were not the only signs that indicate a change in Quebec cinema. The IQC refused a $40,000 subsidy to the Semaine du cinéma québécois, which could not hold its spring festival ; the last Albert Tessier award went to a producer instead of a director, (Gilles Groulx had been under consideration) ; and the critics' prize, relinquished the year before by the Institut, became the Ouimet-Molson award and was given to... Gilles Carle for **Les Plouffe.**

The picture is no brighter when we look at assistance given to Quebec cinema by federal institutions. The NFB, conforming with a prestige policy favouring feature fiction film **(J. A. Martin photographe, Cordélia, Les beaux souvenirs, La quarantaine)** had to admit that it had somewhat sacrificed the documentary and social-interest film. Furthermore, the combined policies of the CFDC and the Capital Cost Allowance were a monumental failure. Even the national English-Canadian cinema has problems and does not recognize itself in films like **Tribute,** for example. But, at the other extreme, thanks to this assistance, Quebec professionals produced **Lucky Star, Scanners, Dreamworld, Visiting Hours, Atlantic City,** and **Quest For Fire.**

Is this a linguistic and cultural farce ? Denis Héroux has said that "it is time to separate the men from the boys !" Let us try to see how and why, since this crisis has not only created losers but winners also.

Economic nationalism and cultural nationalism make good bedfellows

Ottawa's policies, based mostly on management and profitability, have supported the production of the currently fashionable ficture feature ; those policies have encouraged the merging of production houses and have favoured monopolization.

According to this system, the product is deemed Canadian/Québécois if the producers, technicians, and administrators are Québécois or Canadian. Therefore, **the nationalism of cultural industries is a function, first and foremost, of economic nationalism.** That is why when Denis Héroux, in 1981, spoke of "the men", he was referring to those of the newly-formed Association of Canadian Movie Production Companies, where English Canadians and Québécois rub shoulders in such organizations as Astral Films, Dal Productions, Filmplan International, Mutual Production Ltd., International Cinema Corporation, etc.

These "big boys" of the Canadian cinema are signally in complete agreement with such federal cultural policy objectives as those of the Applebaum-Hébert report, as well as with the projects more recently announced by Francis Fox that touch on the field of pay television, the potential golden calf of film production.

These global, federal cultural policies not only feed the economic nationalism of the cultural industries, they also "dot the 'i' " as far as cultural nationalism in general. As Francis Fox has said "... surely it is not a coincidence if in Canada renewal comes on all fronts at the same time, from the constitution to culture." Whether we talk about a constitution, a people, a culture... let it be within multiculturalism ! Applebaum-Hébert took up the same idea :

> We heard it expressed in many different ways that Canadians want a culture which both represents them to the world and defines them to themselves. In short, we found that Canadians have both the will and the means to move together in directions which will further enrich and ennoble the Canadian spirit.

Such an obvious negation of Quebec's national rights – as well as those of many native peoples – is exactly what had been denounced in the spring of 1980 at the Canadian Images Festival in Peterborough during a panel discussion with members of the Applebaum-Hébert committee. What follows proves that the then-protesting filmmakers – Québécois, English-Canadian and native – were right.[2] Federal policies on cultural industries reward an official cultural nationalism or "constitutional nationalism," as it were. In the meantime, if necessary, some film producers readily emphasise "international culture." Why else the hesitant nationalism of **Les Plouffe**, for example ?

Denis Héroux admits that this nationalism is just incidental to a film's more universal subject. Furthermore, on Radio-Canada in 1979, this same producer stated quite plainly that nationalism derives from outdated values and that we should,

A film like Anne-Claire Poirier's ***Mourir à tue-tête*** *is an endangered creation in today's Quebec cinema*

nstead, follow "more universal, more contemporary, more American trends... yes, more American !" Similarly Héroux criticized English-Canadian nationalism at the Toronto premiere of **Quest For Fire :**

> Said Héroux with disgust : 'One English producer in Toronto sent me a letter telling me that **Quest For Fire** should not be financed because it did not have the soul of Canada in it.'

As Claude Héroux, Quebec representative of Filmplan International, once pointed out to students, "in a state of crisis, we have to act on a more international level ; American film markets are coveted, therefore we must adapt to the language of that cinema, to its subjects, its content..." And Gilles Carle said recently on Radio-Canada : "Nationalism closes itself off within its nationalist culture, which has become the new parish with its new priests."

So it seems to be enough to turn to the panaceas of universal efficiency, viability and exportability, to rid ourselves of narrow, chauvinist nationalism. But that is not all. These minstrels of universality are themselves nationalists since they advocate nationalism **on the economic level** for the purpose of creating a solid, private film and television industry ; and, as has been noted, they don't mind adding to this financial nationalism, an incidental cultural nationalism whenever they need it. Up to a point this economic nationalism of the cultural industries has the same relation to its Canadian/Québécois roots that an oil tanker feels for its Panamanian registry ! In this sense, to reject nationalism only means to attack a national content whose characteristics are more than simply those of economic values.

II. FOR THE PQ THE FRUITS WERE NOT WHAT THE BLOSSOMS PROMISED

Why, since 1976, have Quebec's cinema assistance policies (politique d'aide de l'État au cinéma) developed in much the same way as federal assistance policies ?

The reasons for this remain unclear because these policies adopted the veneer of Quebec nationalism, a nationalism better defined than the Canadian variety. Secondly, the relationship between Quebec's filmmakers and the PQ was more ambiguous than the much clearer relationship with the "number-one enemy", the federal government. In 1974 the filmmakers' rebellion took place under the Bourassa government, which had created, under great pains, the IQC in 1975-1976. But, at the time of the electoral triumph of the PQ in 1976, things suddenly changed direction. Many filmmakers now found themselves chanting :

> "Quebec cinema...
> with our government
> for our society..."

First of all, there was the matter of working with the PQ to "reclaim Quebec's cinema from foreign economy and ideology." Some of this enthusiasm was reflected in the promises of the Livre Bleu of 1978 entitled **Vers une politique du cinéma au Québec.**

But the PQ turned its back on the progressive nationalism of the '60s and '70s, by institutionalizing another kind of nationalism. From the beginning it too supported the concept of cultural industries, the necessary merging of enterprises and increased assistance to management and marketing. As Claude Godbout said in 1981, after having been elected president of the IQC, it was deemed necessary to help industry financing and markets, to find assistance for companies, to make the tax system work for the cinema, and above all to work on the investment structure ; to adapt to the context, to get out of the documentary and to move towards the fiction film. Here too economic nationalism dominated cultural nationalism, for the purpose of "building Quebec."

The homogeneity of the sixties no longer exists

Centred on the logic of economic objectives, a certain cultural nationalism in the cinema quickly lost its aggressivity, its demanding character and even its richest fundamental elements. Instead, it put itself completely at the service of propaganda for the party, or else it became prey to folklore of macramé-cinéma ; and finally fell in line with the past, fully giving in to a retrograde style. For some years now the fiction feature film hardly speaks of the present ; new features like **Les Plouffe II, The Tin Flute, Maria Chapdelaine,** are no exception to this trend.

This kind of nationalism is also abundantly found in the advertising film, with its avalanche of "made in Quebec", "so much at home", "six million hydro-quebecers", etc. Not only small and medium-sized businesses wallow in this kind of 'nationalism', but also Canadian Tire, Kraft Foods, Alcan, Pratt and Whitney etc.

This type of economic nationalism does not cover the whole of cinematographic activity by any means. The so-called "cultural" cinema does not decrease its production, regardless of good or bad years. But, over the years, serious rifts have appeared in the film community ; the unanimity of the sixties no longer exists.

Certainly, filmmakers like Gilles Groulx, Arthur Lamothe, Michel Brault, Pierre Perrault, Bernard Gosselin, Pierre Hébert, and Yves Dion still follow in the traditions of the quiet revolution, even if they express themselves with marked ideological differences.

Over the past two or three years another significant movement has appeared that has led to a renewed questioning of Quebec's "first" cinema of the '60s. Claude Jutra, for example, declares that he is "not the militant type" and that he "does not believe in a national Quebec cinema." Fernand Dansereau feels he is starting from zero : "We were far away from entertainment... this aspect, so essential to the cinema, had been neglected too often in favour of a cinema drained by national and social battles... In the beginning we wanted to make fiction films but social conditions forced us into the documentary."

Carle, who would like to reconcile fiction and documentary styles, speaks harsh words when he describes the cinematic tradition of the '60s as "... this cumbersome petit-bourgeois tradition, of Quebec's new wave, so harmful to the cinematic professions." Clément Perron, on a similar note, says : "... our **auteur** cinema has done away with the vitally important role of the script-writer." Claude Godbout also thinks that it is necessary to establish "cinematic values that are somewhat different from the ones we have adhered to

for the last ten years." Anne-Claire Poirier similarly states : "People are tired of seeing themselves in the kitchen drinking beer all day long... we have to stop feeling guilty because nobody talks about the poor, or for the poor... For a few years now, I have had the feeling that women's film is at a standstill..."

Denys Arcand, who did not want to direct the political episodes of **Empire Inc.,** explains : "Enough is enough. I have had it with politics. I want to have a bit of fun, to make 'cinema,' to worry about technique, to direct actors."

In short, to adopt new values means to question once again, if not all references to Quebec's cinema, at least its deepest national characteristics which have been linked to a strong, popular, critical, social content. This point became clear with the release of **Les bons débarras.** At that time Francis Mankiewicz said : "In the past we tended to paint a dark, pessimistic documentary of picture of reality. Possibly this is the reason why nobody wanted to see our films..." Along the same lines, but with journalistic brevity and brutality, **La Presse** ran the headline : "The old cinema is dead, good riddance."

We may call this a "devastating revelation", but it has not happened in Quebec alone. Recently Swiss filmmaker Alain Tanner, invited to a Canadian panel discussion on the topic of national cinema, said :

> The gospel of the sixties does not interest me any longer. Nationalism does not mean much to me, it is a backward battle which holds no interest for me... I no longer want to use the cinema as a means to provoke socio-political change.

III. IN DEFENCE OF A POPULAR PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL CINEMA

The policies of the PQ and the IQC set the parameters for Quebec's new cinema : fiction, experienced management, recognized professionalism, competitive marketing.

These policies attract not only those people who, for all practical purposes, reject the development of a national cinema but also those people who wish to strengthen it mostly by encouraging the monopolization of cultural enterprises and by reinforcing the work of some professionals.

What is the price we have to pay ? First of all, these policies repress a certain ultra-nationalist cinema that wanted to remain within the range of modest budgets. It seems that this type of pro-Péquiste propaganda and folkloric cinema has already faded away.

Secondly, such policies gradually suffocate any kind of experimental cinema by young, involved filmmakers ; this affects the unfashionable fiction film – a cinema that is nationalistic but without being chauvinistic. These filmmakers are not all against making films like **Les Plouffe,** but they are outraged that those films are made at the expense of an alternative cinema on the pretext of getting out of the "ghetto of art and experimentation", of settling the fate of "auteur cinema", or with the pretention of playing the cultural messiah. An exemple of this was given by Denis Héroux when, from Paris, he stated reassuringly : "We are not going to abandon Quebec's cinema. If I do not make it, nobody will."

Ottawa and Quebec cultural policies, sometimes a combination of the two, go against all creative energy. Many women filmmakers complain that they are often the first ones hit. These policies also paralyze Quebec's regional cinema, that of native peoples, as well as the cinema of Anglophone cultural workers ; and they penalize film students who then come to swell the ranks of the unemployed.

When these filmmakers or aspiring filmmakers say that Quebec's national cinema is in danger, they are saying that the content of culture or national rights cannot be evaluated by using the bureaucratic point system for financial assistance or tax shelters, nor can it be measured only in economic spill-over. "Social and cultural profitability have to be taken into account as well," as Sylvie Groulx has pointed out.

What does nationalism in all its cinematic forms look like ? It has now moved considerably away from the PQ (Louis Dussault, like other artists, has provided evidence to this fact). This type of nationalism continues to distance itself from the folklore of narrow, chauvinist, macramé cinema. Quebec film will not necessarily be confined to national subject matter but will open up to ethnic groups and to other countries. It will take an interest in the outside world, the international, the universal, often while favouring other kinds of "cultural", progressive subjects ; the 8e Semaine du cinéma québécois, for example, was presented under the theme of "Pictures From Here and Elsewhere."

This national, popular and nonconformist cinema does not want to break with the tradition of the sixties ; on the contrary, it wants to broaden its base, which is that of Quebec's cinema as a whole. This is the kind of cinema that portrayed Barbara, a Jewish Anglophone in **Le chat dans le sac,** Johanna in **À tout prendre,** the black American boxer Ronald Jones in **Golden Gloves,** or the "balloon-headed" Indians in the **Bûcherons de la Manouane.** More recent examples of this kind of cinema can be found in **A Wives' Tale** or **Les voleurs de job** by Tahani Rached ; the Italians of **Le grand remue-ménage** or Luce Guilbeault's film on American feminists... the list could go on.

The difficulties faced by Quebec cinema at the moment are therefore two-fold : its erosion in relation to truly national, contemporary values (non-folkloric) ; and its erosion in relation to progressive social values, those of the cinema of analysis and intervention.

Put in this context, the demands of the Front des travailleurs et travailleuses de la culture for the development of a popular national culture, make sense – "cultural, collective, democratic development" is valuable to the cinema.

Such a **national and popular** cinema is far from being irreconcilable with fiction film and commercial markets. Some examples include : **Les ordres, Les bons débarras, L'affaire Coffin, Ça peut pas être l'hiver, on n'a même pas eu d'été, Mourir à tue-tête, Les beaux souvenirs, Les fleurs sauvages,** etc. This kind of cinema is currently produced all over the world ; for example, the films of Bernard Tavernier, Costa Gavras, René Vauthier, Francesco Rosi ; in **Harlan County, China Syndrome, Reds,** etc.

This concept of cinema is clearly in contrast with the antinational, or superficially national cinema. And the difference between these two kinds of film is far more important

than the difference between fiction and documentary, between the language of Quebec and international English, between the so-called "open" cinema and "ghetto" cinema, between the parochial and the wide horizons of the universal.

The project of reconstructing a national Quebec cinema is currently at the stage of regaining its strength, of encouraging multi-faceted creative expression, in opposition to Quebec's discriminatory policies and Ottawa's definitely anti-national policies. As was proclaimed in the manifesto of the Front de la culture, this project rejects state-sponsored cultural development, "based on the creation of small highly-subsidized Quebec monopolies that specialize in the production and distribution of official, cultural, standardized, 'international' products."

I do not want to be overly dramatic and prophesy the inevitable decline and death of Quebec cinema. Nevertheless it is important that we understand the gravity of the situation, where 25 years of collective work are in danger of losing ground, or of being erased altogether. In spite of their differences, Quebec's and Ottawa's policies express a similar point of view on the concept of cultural-economic nationalism. This is what has inspired independent cultural workers to work together on a different kind of project.

Some people might resent such a project, or snigger at it. They can continue to feel proud of themselves as they take part in Oscar celebrations and then phone from Hollywood to say "how electrifying it is to be here, to hear one's name announced in front of 450 million viewers."

For the rest of us who stayed home because of a lack of funds for either filmmaking or travel, the call for the reconstruction of a national, popular, Quebec cinema makes itself heard loud and clear. Be it on the few remaining sets or on the streets, "The showmage must go on!"

CEGEP Montmorency

Translated by Petra Valier

Notes

For the purpose of keeping the text unburdened with references, I would like to take the opportunity to outline my principal sources of reference. Most of the quotes are taken from interviews from **Le Devoir, La Presse, The Globe & Mail,** and **Cinema Canada.** The quotes by Claude Héroux and Sylvie Groulx are taken from a debate organized around and during a course at the CEGEP Montmorency (Spring 1981 – entitled **Cinéma québécois**; Jacques Blain also took part in the panel).

Other documents consulted: the hearings of the Commission d'étude sur le cinéma et l'audiovisuel – CECA (Commission inquiring into the cinema and the audiovisual); **le Québec: un enjeu culturel** (Quebec: culture at stake) in consultation with Clément Richard; the **Manifeste** (Manifesto) of the Front des travailleurs et travailleuses de la culture (Alliance of Cultural Workers).

Institut Québécois du cinéma: **Rapport 1981, Plan quinquennal d'aide** (5-year assistance plan) and the **Modification au programme d'aide 1982-1983** (changes to the assistance plan 1982-1983).

The enquiry into a federal cultural policy (Applebaum-Hébert) **Guide de discussion** (Discussion guide) and **Compte rendu des mémoires et des audiences publiques** (Summary of Briefs and Hearings).

Also consulted were: the Radio-Canada commentary **Parlons de notre culture** (Let's talk about our culture); films presented by the CBC under the title **Applebaum-Hébert Hearings** from which Jacques Hébert's quote was taken.

1/ This overview relates to part of the enquiry **Où s'en va le cinéma québécois?** (Where is Quebec cinema headed?) by Louise Carrière, two articles of which were published in the magazine **Offensives,** vol. 2, nos 1 & 2.

2/ At the time of that panel, the point of view taken by Quebec filmmakers was defended by a manifesto of **l'AVECQ – The Association vidéo et cinéma québécois** (Association of Quebec cinema and video), by the Independent Film Alliance and the Council of Canadian Filmmakers; finally the same point of view was expressed by Micmac singer and filmmaker Willie Dunn.

National Film, Television and Sound Archives

Archives nationales du film, de la télévision et de l'enregistrement sonore

Public Archives Canada

Archives publiques Canada

Logo from one of a 1929 series of 18 shorts, each featuring a song by a prominent French Canadian singer.

Image de tête du film ***En roulant ma boule*** *qui fait partie d'une série de 18 court métrages tournés en 1929, présentant chacun une chanson interprétée par un chanteur bien connu de folklore canadien-français.*

The National Film, Television and Sound Archives acquires and conserves all forms of moving images and recorded sound of national historic significance, whether produced by government departments or agencies as part of the public record, by public or private sectors of the film and broadcasting industries, or by individuals or organizations for their private or corporate purposes. The collections include a wide range of material, from documentary to drama, and from current affairs to popular entertainment. The objectives of the Archives are to collect records of historical, cultural and sociological significance, and to document the history and development of the Canadian film and broadcast industries.

HISTORY

Groundwork for the division began in 1967, when the Archives started a systematic acquisition of sound recordings (oral history and radio broadcasting). Two years later, a disastrous fire destroyed more than half the Canadian film on nitrate stock then known to exist. This prompted the Archives to launch a special project to locate and safeguard the surviving nitrate film

Les Archives nationales du film, de la télévision et de l'enregistrement sonore acquièrent et conservent toutes les sortes d'images animées et de documents sonores qui ont une importance historique nationale, que ce soient des productions provenant de ministères ou d'agences gouvernementales, des secteurs public et privé de l'industrie du film et de la télévision, ou d'individus et d'organismes agissant pour leur compte. Les collections comprennent une grande variété de genres : documentaires et fiction, affaires publiques ou distractions populaires. Les A.N.F.T.E.S. ont comme objectif de collectionner les oeuvres d'intérêt historique, culturel et sociologique et de documenter l'histoire et le développement des industries canadiennes du film, de la radio et de la télévision.

HISTORIQUE

Les Archives ont commencé l'acquisition systématique d'enregistrements sonores (histoire orale et émissions de radio) en 1967. Deux ans plus tard, après qu'un désastreux incendie eut détruit environ la moitié des films canadiens encore sur pellicule de nitrate, elles lancèrent un programme de recherche et de récupération des films nitrate produits au Canada. Ces activités

En roulant ma boule *by Eugène Daigneault et ses joyeux bûcherons.*

En roulant ma boule *mettant en vedette Eugène Daigneault et ses joyeux bûcherons.*

produced in Canada before 1951. These activities were administratively linked with the formal establishment in May 1972 of the National Film Archives as a division of the Public Archives of Canada. For the first four years, the division staff and budget available were able to meet only the urgent requirements of the nitrate conversion program.

Prior to 1951, all theatrical motion pictures and most films in the 35mm gauge were manufactured on an inherently unstable cellulose nitrate stock. Although this stock had many properties that made it suitable for theatrical exhibition, its flammable and volatile composition led to numerous fires that destroyed a large proportion of the Canadian film heritage. What had survived was deteriorating rapidly and in many cases was being destroyed by nervous owners before the image could be transferred to safety film.

While the introduction of triacetate or safety base stocks reduced the probability of loss through fire or physical decomposition, other technological innovations have resulted in further dangers to the survival of moving images. For example, almost all colour films today use dyes that fade severely in less than seven years under normal storage conditions. At the same

furent administrativement reliées à l'établissement des Archives nationales du film en tant que division des Archives publiques du Canada en 1972. Pendant les quatre années qui suivirent cependant, le personnel et les budgets disponibles suffirent seulement à répondre aux exigences du programme de transfert des films nitrate sur pellicule de sécurité.

Tous les films destinés aux salles de cinéma, ainsi que la majorité des copies 35mm, étaient jusqu'en 1951 imprimés sur nitrate de cellulose.

Quoique les qualités de la pellicule aient eu des avantages pour la projection en salle, sa composition inflammable et volatile provoqua souvent des incendies. Ainsi disparut une bonne partie de l'héritage cinématographique canadien.

Les films qui avaient survécu se détérioraient rapidement et beaucoup d'entre eux étaient détruits par leur propriétaire inquiet avant même d'être recopiés sur pellicule de sécurité.

Tandis que l'apparition de la pellicule de sécurité réduisait considérablement les risques d'incendie ou de décomposition, d'autres innovations techniques entraînaient des risques différents pour la survie des films. Ces dernières années par exemple, presque tous les

A rare still from ***Evangeline****, Canada's first feature film, produced by Canadian Bioscope Co. in Nova Scotia in 1913. No copy of the film remains in existence.*

Une des rares photos de plateau du premier long métrage canadien ***Évangéline****, produit par la Canadian Bioscope Company Ltd. en Nouvelle-Écosse en 1913. Il n'existe plus aucune copie de ce film.*

time the adoption of 2-inch quadruplex videotape for most television broadcast purposes allowed the producers to wipe the tape for re-use as required. This frequently led to the erasure of programs that might have been preserved as part of the public record.

In January 1976, the Public Archives of Canada was officially mandated and funded to acquire and conserve moving image and recorded sound documents of national historic significance. In 1980, the name of the division was changed to the National Film, Television and Sound Archives to reflect more accurately the broad range of its activities.

films couleur ont été d'un type dont les teintes s'affadissent sensiblement en moins de sept ans dans un environnement normal. En même temps, l'adoption du ruban quadruplex pour la majorité des émissions télévisées a permis aux producteurs d'effacer et de réutiliser le ruban vidéo. De nombreux documents qui auraient dû être conservés pour la postérité sont ainsi disparus sans recours.

En janvier 1976 les Archives publiques du Canada ont officiellement reçu le mandat et les fonds nécessaires pour acquérir et conserver les films, les bandes vidéo et les documents sonores de valeur durable.

En 1980, le nom de la division a été modifié en celui d'Archives nationales du film, de la télévision et de l'enregistrement sonore pour mieux refléter l'étendue des activités auxquelles elle se consacre.

HOLDINGS

There are now over 30,000 films and television programs stored in the Archives, as well as over 80,000 sound documents (40,000 hours). They cover a wide range of social and cultural subjects, from short films of the early 1900's to contemporary film, radio and television productions. A large collection of motion picture still photographs, a modest poster collection, a library of 8,000 books, and 1,300 periodical titles related to radio, oral history, cinema and television, supplement the main holdings. There is also an index to world cinema covering about 300,000 film titles, as well

COLLECTIONS

Il y a actuellement plus de 30 000 films et programmes de télévision conservés aux Archives, et environ 80 000 documents sonores. Ils traitent d'une grande variété de sujets à portée sociale et culturelle, allant des courts métrages tournés au début du siècle aux émissions de radio et de télévision et aux films contemporains. Une vaste quantité de photos de films, un bon nombre d'affiches et une bibliothèque de 8 000 livres et 1 300 périodiques se rapportant à la radio, à l'histoire orale, au cinéma et à la télévision, complètent les collections principales. Un répertoire des titres du

A C.P.R. promotional film, one of 13 made in 1910 by the Edison Company to entice prospective immigrants to come to Canada.

Un film publicitaire du Canadien Pacifique, l'un d'une série de 13 films réalisés en 1910 par la compagnie Edison, devant servir à promouvoir l'immigration au Canada.

as over 80,000 files devoted to all aspects of film and broadcasting.

Documents are acquired from various sources. The NFTSA has a great deal of material placed in its care by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the National Film Board, government departments and Crown corporations, as well as by private film and broadcasting companies, major corporations and political parties. Interesting documents are often obtained from individual donors too, sometimes through the acquisition of collections by other divisions of the Public Archives. Amateur productions of various kinds frequently reveal new approaches and subjects not often covered by professionnals, and can be a useful supplement to the more widely distributed types of film.

The NFTSA tries to be as comprehensive as possible in its approach to collecting; it is interested in all aspects of the audio-visual media, including popular fiction films and television programs, sports, news, documentary, and sponsored material, as well as film and television as forms of art. Special efforts are made to search out nitrate newsreels on Canadian subjects, as well as early productions of government organizations such as the Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau, and private companies such as Associated Screen News. Recent developments in Canadian feature film production are being documented, and the NFTSA is attempting to obtain new prints of as many productions as possible.

The NFTSA is enlarging its activities in television to an ever-increasing degree. In a few years the preserva-

cinéma international comprenant le titre de 30 000 films et plus de 80 000 dossiers sur tous les aspects du film et de la télévision sont à la disposition des chercheurs.

Les documents proviennent de sources diverses comme la Société Radio-Canada, l'Office national du film, des ministères et des sociétés de la Couronne ainsi que des compagnies privées de film et de radio ou de télédiffusion, de grandes corporations privées et des partis politiques. D'intéressants documents proviennent aussi du public en général par le truchement de collections acquises par d'autres divisions des Archives publiques. Les productions d'amateurs proposent une façon de voir différente et des sujets qui ne sont pas souvent abordés par les professionnels, offrant ainsi un complément utile aux documents trouvés sur le marché.

Les A.N.F.T.E.S. tentent d'avoir une approche aussi compréhensive que possible en choisissant des documents qui représentent les aspects divers des media audio-visuels, y compris les films et les émissions de télévision les plus populaires, les sports, les nouvelles, les documentaires, les séries dramatiques commanditées, ainsi que le cinéma et la télévision en tant qu'art. Les Archives font un effort particulier pour retrouver les films d'actualités sur nitrate traitant de sujets canadiens, ainsi que les anciennes productions d'organismes gouvernementaux tels que le Bureau cinématographique du gouvernement canadien ou de compagnies privées comme l'Associated Screen News. La récente explosion de l'industrie du film au Canada n'a pas été ignorée et les Archives acquièrent les copies d'un grand nombre de productions récentes.

***La maison en ordre*, a five-reel feature directed by Gordon Sparling for Shell Oil in January 1936. Neither the French version nor the English (entitled *House in Order*) has survived.**

***La maison en ordre* est un long métrage de cinq bobines, produit pour Shell Oil en janvier 1936 et réalisé par Gordon Sparling. Malheureusement aucune des versions du film n'a apparemment survécu, y compris la version anglaise intitulée *House in Order*.**

tion of television programs will probably be its largest single activity. Since 1976 several conservation projects have been set in motion in collaboration with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the intake will increase as the NFTSA acquires additional technical facilities and storage capacity. The work is now progressing on several fronts : a system designed to preserve current news broadcasts has been set in motion; there is a project to identify and preserve all network news film from 1952 to the present; the Archives is now storing videotapes from the 1976 Olympics and the 1978 Commonwealth Games; and a special project is underway to preserve 12,000 16mm kinescope recordings, among which are hundreds of early drama productions.

The most urgent priority is current television productions. Because videotape is re-usable, the lifespan of programs is very short unless a special effort is made to prevent their erasure. Under an agreement with the CBC, which involves the preparation of inventories of tapes and constant consultation between the two organizations, programs are identified on a priority basis and graded according to various criteria to determine which will be retained and on what formats they are to be stored. The work of copying the tapes is then done at

Les A.N.F.T.E.S. s'intéressent particulièrement à la télévision et, d'ici quelques années, la conservation des émissions de télévision sera devenue la plus importante de leurs activités. Depuis 1976, plusieurs projets ont été entrepris en collaboration avec la Société Radio-Canada et ces projets prendront de plus amples proportions à mesure qu'augmenteront les capacités des Archives en équipement technique et en espace d'entreposage. Le travail progresse actuellement sur plusieurs fronts : un système pour conserver les bulletins de nouvelles est en place; un projet d'identification et de conservation de tous les films d'actualités présentés au réseau national depuis 1952 a été élaboré; les Archives ont maintenant dans leurs voûtes les rubans des Jeux olympiques de 1976 et des Jeux du Commonwealth de 1978; un projet spécial est en cours pour assurer la conservation de 12 000 cinégrammes en 16 mm parmi lesquels se trouvent des centaines de dramatiques des débuts de la télévision.

La plus grande priorité reste cependant la conservation des émissions courantes de télévision. Parce que les bandes vidéo sont effaçables, la survie d'une émission est de très courte durée à moins que des efforts particuliers ne soient faits pour prévenir son élimination.

*Director G. T. Booth and other crew members on the set of **Pioneer Trails**, a two-reel musical shot in Toronto in 1935.*

*George Thorne Booth, réalisateur, entouré de comédiens et de techniciens sur le plateau de **Pioneer Trails**. Il s'agit d'une comédie musicale en deux bobines tournée à Toronto en 1935.*

the NFTSA in Ottawa, and the originals are returned to the CBC for re-use. This television conservation program will soon be extended to other broadcasting organizations in the private sector, and to production centres outside Toronto and Montreal.

The NFTSA has also developed close ties with the organizations that produce large numbers of sound recordings, including the CBC, the private radio stations and the radio news agencies. Individual donors, be they broadcasters or collectors, also provide interesting documents.

The advent of the portable tape recorder has allowed historians and other researchers to employ oral history techniques to strengthen existing sources of historical documentation. These oral history interviews are valuable archival records and are preserved at the Archives on the same basis as other types of sound recordings. They may be acquired as part of manuscript collections, deposited by researchers following the completion of their project, or the Archives may collaborate in iniating the interviews that produce the recordings as part of the oral history program.

Une procédure est en place impliquant la préparation d'un inventaire des bandes vidéo et une consultation permanente entre les A.N.F.T.E.S. et Radio-Canada. Les émissions sont identifiées sur une base de priorités et évaluées selon différents critères pour déterminer celles qui méritent d'être conservées et sur quel format elles seront recopiées. La copie des émissions se fait aux Archives à Ottawa et les bandes originales sont retournées à Radio-Canada pour être effacées et réutilisées. Ce programme de conservation des émissions courantes sera prochainement étendu à d'autres organismes de télédiffusion du secteur privé ainsi qu'à des centres de production ainsi qu'à Montréal et Toronto.

Les enregistrements sonores sur ruban sont également de nature éphémère et les A.N.F.T.E.S. maintiennent des relations étroites avec les organisations qui les produisent en grande quantité, c'est-à-dire Radio-Canada, les stations de radio privées et les agences de nouvelles radiophoniques. Certaines personnes, qu'elles aient fait les enregistrements ou qu'elles les collectionnent, fournissent aussi des documents d'un grand intérêt.

L'avènement du magnétophone a permis aux historiens et autres chercheurs d'utiliser les techniques

Madge Macbeth's drama ***Superwoman*** *being broadcast from radio station CNRO, Ottawa, 1920s.*

Superwoman*, série dramatique de Madge Macbeth, radiodiffusée durant les années 20 par la station CNRO d'Ottawa.*

STORAGE

The NFTSA stores its material in various locations. Nitrate base film is stored in special isolated, climate controlled vaults in Ottawa until it can be restored and transferred to safety stock. A cold storage vault for storing colour films, which fade very quickly at normal room temperature, has recently been constructed in one of the safety stock storage facilities. Most viewing copies for both film and videotape, and all audio recordings, are available for reference at the main NFTSA offices. In addition to its various storage vaults in Ottawa the NFTSA operates the air-conditioned

d'histoire orale pour ajouter aux sources déjà existantes de documentation historique. Les entrevues d'histoire orale sont des documents d'archives d'une valeur certaine, et sont conservées aux Archives au même titre que les autres types d'enregistrements sonores. Ces entrevues proviennent de collections de manuscrits, de recherchistes qui ont complété un projet, ou même sont des éléments d'un programme d'histoire orale entrepris par les A.N.F.T.E.S.

ENTREPOSAGE

Les A.N.F.T.E.S. entreposent leurs documents en plusieurs endroits. Les films inflammables au nitrate sont entreposés dans des chambres à basse température jusqu'à ce qu'ils soient recopiés sur de la pellicule de sécurité. Une salle spéciale a récemment été installée pour conserver les films couleur sujets à la décoloration quand ils sont exposés à la température ambiante. La plupart des copies de consultation et les éléments de tirage sont conservés dans les locaux des Archives à Ottawa. En plus des diverses aires d'entreposage à Ottawa même, les A.N.F.T.E.S. occupent une salle

The control room on the opening night of television station CBLT, Toronto, September 7, 1952.

La salle de régie le soir de l'inauguration de la station de télévision CBLT à Toronto le 7 septembre 1952.

storage vault for safety film, videotape and audiotape at the Public Archives Records Centre in Toronto.

CONSERVATION FACILITIES

The NFTSA has a conservation laboratory for examining, testing, restoring and printing films. A great deal of copying work, and all the chemical processing, is contracted out to private laboratories. All films sent out for copying are prepared by NFTSA personnel, and rigorous inspection procedures ensure that the work done meets the standards of the Archives.

The high quality equipment in the NFTSA recording studio enables the Archives to produce the most faithful possible copies from all types of sound recordings in its custody. Measures are taken to prevent the deterioration of the original sound recordings, as well as to ensure the maintenance of the high quality of the preservation copies.

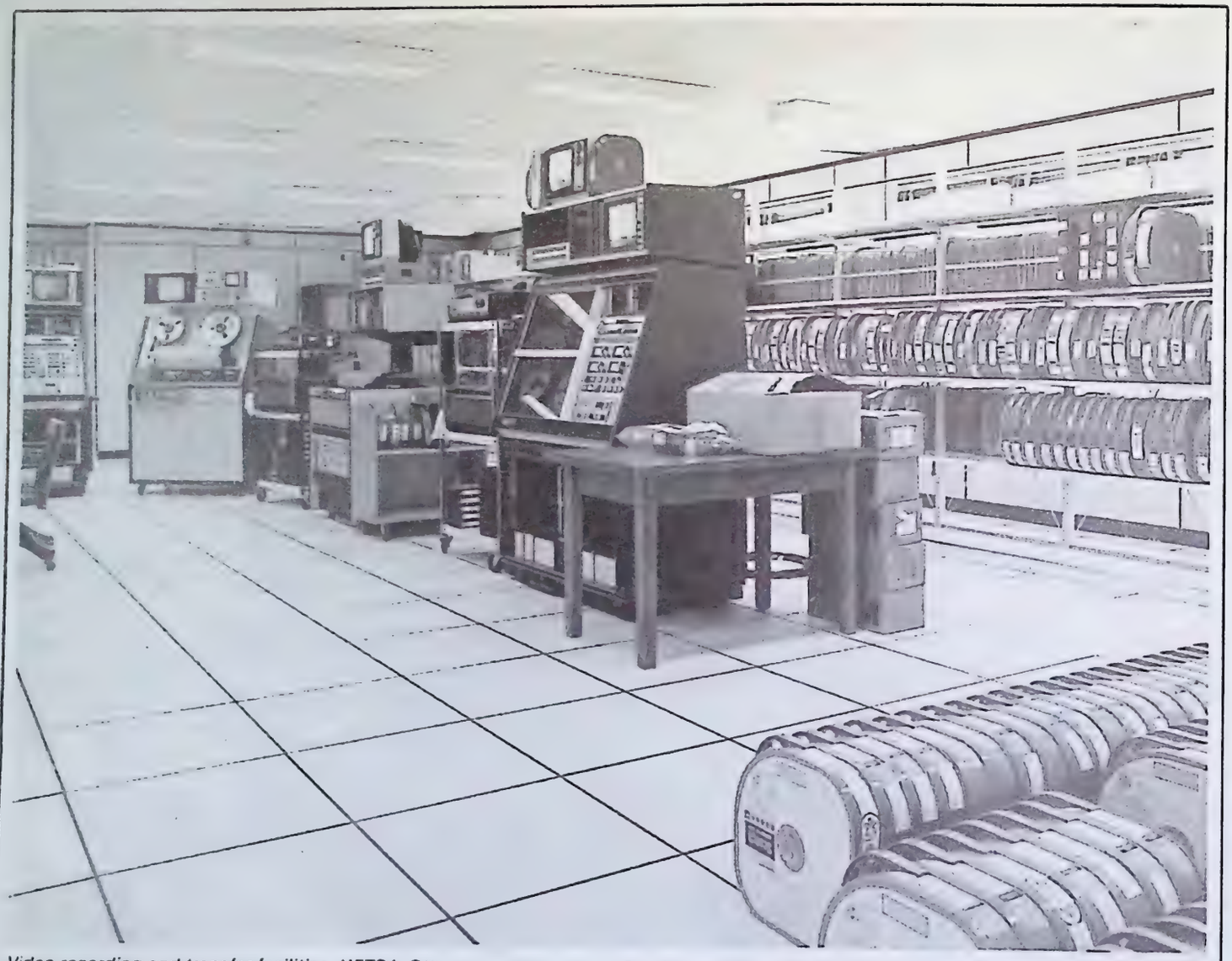
The television facilities are extensive, and include broadcast standard equipment as well as various cassette formats for making viewing copies of film and television

climatisée au Centre fédéral de documents des Archives publiques à Toronto.

CONSERVATION

Les A.N.F.T.E.S. ont installé un laboratoire de conservation pour l'examen et le traitement des films et pour le tirage de certaines copies. Mais la plus grande partie des travaux de transfert et tout le processus de développement des films sont confiés à des laboratoires du secteur privé. Tous les films copiés à l'extérieur des Archives sont d'abord préparés par le personnel des A.N.F.T.E.S., et une vérification rigoureuse assure à leur retour que les travaux exécutés sont de la qualité exigée.

Les enregistrements sonores sont réalisés dans un studio des A.N.F.T.E.S. avec de l'équipement de première qualité qui assure la plus grande fidélité possible à la reproduction des documents. Toutes les mesures sont prises pour empêcher la détérioration des enregistrements originaux et pour garantir la qualité des copies de conservation.



Video recording and transfer facilities, NFTSA, Ottawa.

Studio des ANFTES à Ottawa, équipé pour l'enregistrement et la reproduction des documents audio-visuels.

holdings. The NFTSA has pioneered the use of 2-inch helical scan videotape as an interim storage master for 2-inch quadruplex videotape, a system that protects the content at broadcast standard quality and allows a compression rate of four to one. Viewing copies of almost all the moving images in the collection, whether film or videotape, can be manufactured in-house and on request on either 1/2-inch or 3/4-inch videocassettes.

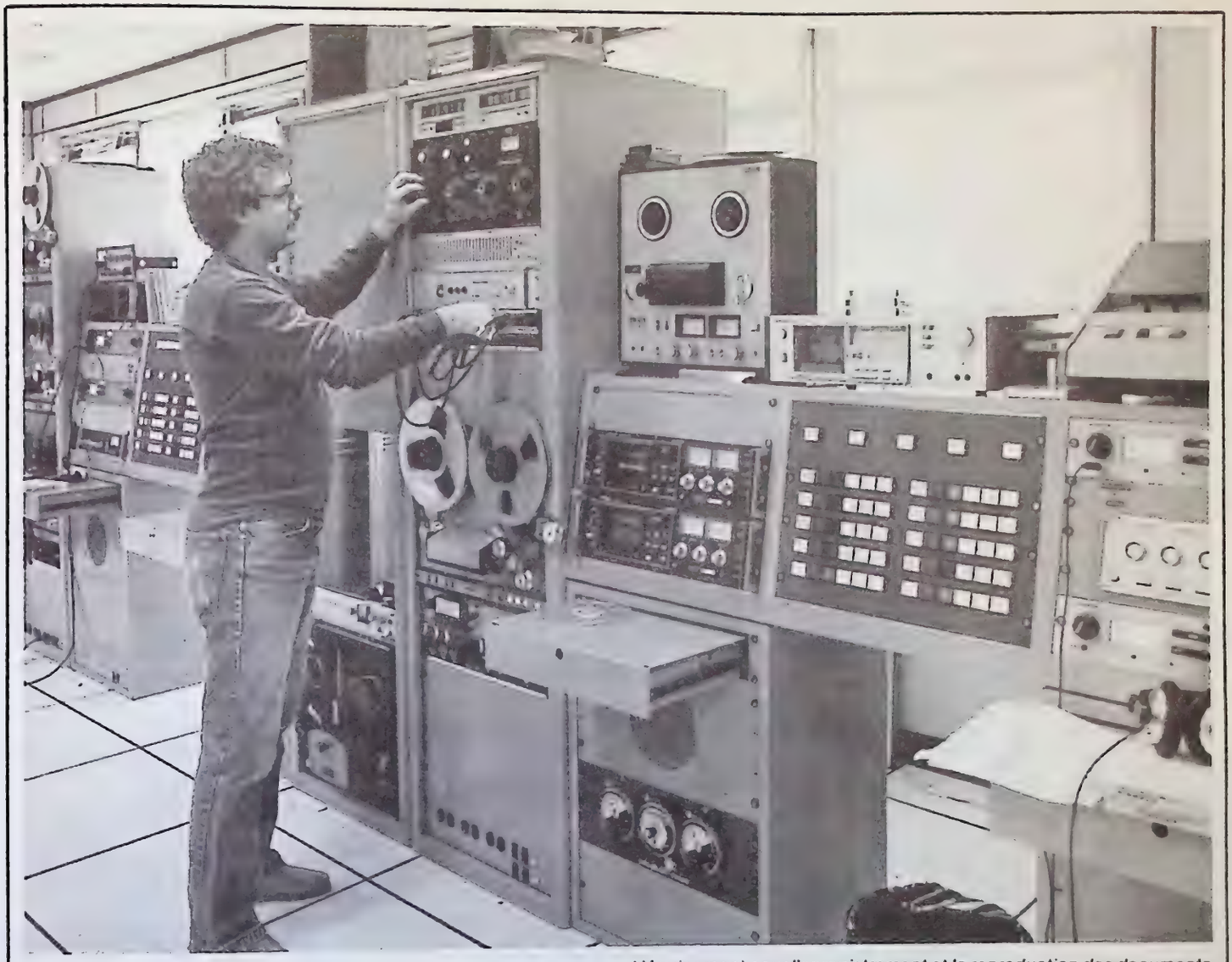
REFERENCE AND RESEARCH FACILITIES

Comprehensive subject indexes to the film, television and recorded sound holdings are open to the public during normal office hours; researchers outside the Ottawa area may, of course, write or telephone to enquire about the holdings by title or subject. Viewings

Les installations de télévision sont importantes et comprennent de l'équipement standard de transmission ainsi que divers formats de vidéo-cassettes pour reproduire les films et les émissions de télévision des collections. Les A.N.F.T.E.S. ont été des pionniers dans l'utilisation de l'enregistrement hélicoïdal de 50 mm pouvant servir à des fins d'entreposage provisoire pour le ruban magnétoscopique quadruplex de 50 mm; ce procédé protège la qualité de la reproduction du vidéogramme et en permet la compression au quart de sa durée réelle. La plupart des copies de visionnement, que l'original soit un film ou une bande vidéo, sont faites par le personnel de la section technique sur des vidéo-cassettes peu coûteuses de 13 mm ou 19 mm.

CONSULTATION ET RECHERCHE

Les services de consultation sont ouverts aux heures normales de bureau; les chercheurs de l'extérieur peuvent évidemment téléphoner ou écrire pour obtenir des renseignements sur les collections. Des arrangements peuvent être faits avec le personnel pour vision-



Sound recording and transfer facilities, NFTSA, Ottawa.

L'équipement pour l'enregistrement et la reproduction des documents sonores aux ANFTES à Ottawa.

or auditions should be arranged in advance to ensure availability of the necessary viewing equipment. While there are no facilities to allow for general circulation or loan of our audio-visual documents, copies may be made at cost of many items in our collections that are not restricted by deposit agreements or copyright.

The NFTSA books and periodicals library with its reproduction service is open to the public. Where duplicates are available, the material can be made accessible to out-of-town researchers through inter-library loan. The NFTSA's information services can provide data on all films distributed in Canada. Of special interest to many people is the documentation and information service on educational, instructional and documentary films.

A selective inventory of the recorded sound collection and a procedures guide to such collections are available. Work on guides to the moving image collections is in progress.

ner ou écouter les documents dans les locaux des Archives. Quoique ces documents ne puissent être prêtés ni loués, on peut en obtenir des copies au prix coûtant dans les limites des termes du contrat de dépôt ou des droits d'auteur. Cette pratique est fréquemment utilisée par les agences de radio et de télédiffusion et par les compagnies de production de films de même que par des particuliers ou des institutions d'enseignement.

Les livres et les périodiques de la bibliothèque des A.N.T.F.T.E.S. peuvent être consultés sur place ou à l'extérieur grâce à la formule du prêt entre bibliothèques. On peut également obtenir des renseignements sur tous les films distribués au Canada et profiter d'un service de documentation et d'information unique en son genre sur les films documentaires, éducatifs, ou de formation professionnelle.

Un guide sélectif des enregistrements sonores de même qu'un manuel sur les méthodes utilisées par les Archives sonores sont à la disposition du public. La préparation d'un guide des collections de films et d'émissions de télévision est en cours.

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Death and Desire

by Peter Baxter

Laura Mulvey's 1975 article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"[1] is one of a small number of important essays on film, psychoanalysis, and the viewing subject. It established the problem of sexual difference as the central issue of contemporary film theory, and drew analytical attention to the function of the image of women and the masculine look in the film text. In a recently published "afterthought"[2], Mulvey has stated her continued adherence to the arguments of "Visual Pleasure", and has extended her frame of reference by considering the problem raised by certain films where the female characters are represented as caught between activity and passivity in a crisis of sexual identity. Mulvey is interested in the contradictions this poses both for the classic Hollywood text, which cannot treat the problem as the ideological contradiction it is, and for the female spectator who is split in the terms of her identification. Her analysis turns on the issue of the female spectator's nostalgic attachment to an active, "masculinised" woman character (Pearl in the Vidor/Selznick film, **Duel In The Sun**), whose impossible position is only resolved in tragic death.

It is characteristic of much American melodrama that the textual working of the female image involves violence and death. For example, in her earlier study Mulvey mentions "the erotic impact [of the Marlene Dietrich character], sanctified by death... displayed as a spectacle to the audience."[3] She also discusses the female characters of some of Alfred Hitchcock's films, where they are the objects of a sadistic voyeurism which articulates the masculine gaze as powerful, erotically charged, and a prime constituent of spectator identification and pleasure. Masculinity becomes signified by the "power to subject another person to the will sadistically or to the gaze voyeuristically."[4] To be feminine is thus to be subjected.

The concepts of sadism and masochism enter Mulvey's article without theoretical exposition, though they open onto one of the most problematic areas of psychoanalytic inquiry, and possibly onto the major realm of film fantasy that still awaits investigation. Since the 1975 publication of **Communications,** No. 23, on psychoanalysis and the cinema, film theory informed by Lacanian psychoanalysis has posed and interpreted the cinema in terms of desire, its subject and object, the textual processes of identification, and the imaginary of the phallus. Generally ignored has been Freud's late-developed theory of a "death instinct" that has intimate correspondence with desire and its manifestations. Sadomasochism – whether it finds its outlet in fantasy pure and simple, or on the stage of reality – is seen by Freud as a fusion of sexual desire and a different, aggresssive force that can indulge in the willful provocation of pain. This aggression is not an attribute of erotic impulse. Though Freud viewed them as often complexly bound up with each other, he eventually described them as springing from different instinctual bases, and as having distinguishable ends. Sadomasochism provides the sexual context for perhaps the most vividly comprehensible manifestation of the death instinct, which Freud was finally to propose as one of the two primary forces of psychic existence: **Thanatos** and **Eros.**

The relationship of these latter concepts is the dualism upon which Freud's speculative thought was structured over the last two decades of his life. The death instinct itself, which Freud admitted to be pure hypothesis, was first mentioned in **Beyond the Pleasure Principle** (1920) in relation to the anecdote of the child playing with the now famous spool of thread. The infantile game of throwing away and bringing back inspired in Freud an analysis of the "compulsion to repeat" unpleasant experiences. Freud needed to explain the clinical phenomenon of involuntary behaviour that accorded neither with the pleasure – nor reality-principles, but was to the contrary a matter of anguish without ulterior reward. The solution to this dilemma was found in the dualism which re-situated all the instinctual processes earlier proposed by Freud. Sexual instincts, ego instincts, self-preservative instincts, etc., were aligned as manifestations of Eros or "life instinct", while Freud brought into complementary place "the instinct of death, or destruction, which is dominant...".[5] "The death instincts... appear in the Freudian conceptual system as a completely new type of instinct which had no place in the previous classifications... . Yet at the same time Freud looks upon these new instincts as the instincts

par excellence, in that they typify the repetitive nature of instinct in general."[6]

Despite the primary place that the death instinct came to occupy in Freud's thought, it has remained a disputed concept in psychoanalytic theory and practice. Part of the difficulty lies in the problem of seizing the death instinct in action, as it were. Eros, says Freud in **An Outline of Psycho-Analysis** (1940), aims "to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them thus – in short, to bind together", whereas the activities of Thanatos are inclined "to undo connections and so to destroy things."[7] This is to say that the libidinal impulses of the life force are directed toward fantasy representations, the imaginary unities in which self and other are constituted. The death instincts do not themselves counter with representations of destruction, but are manifested in the destructive dissolution of representational structures, in an apparent return to a state empty of significance. That particular pleasure of the text called **jouissance** by Barthes, which "brings to a crisis [one's] relation with language"[8], is thus the effect of a pleasure principle which, says Freud in the last section of **Beyond the Pleasure Principle,** "seems actually to serve the death instincts."[9]

Nevertheless, it is exactly on the side of "representation" that I should like to begin a consideration of the death instinct as a component of film fantasy. I want to consider the apparent compulsion of the popular cinema to mount the spectacles of violence, destruction, and death that have marked it since Edison had the execution of Mary Stuart re-enacted for the patrons of his kinetoscope parlours. I want to consider the insertion of this agression into the signification of sexual difference. I assume that these spectacles are not simply the reflections of a calamitous and iniquitous world, but respond to a specific organisation of the imaginary. I assume that they signify more than their immediate narrative contexts would make obvious. I assume that whatever pleasure we might take in them is to some degree offset by the anxieties they arouse, anxieties that do not prevent them from being made, but merely make more problematic the compelling reasons for which they are produced. Freud : "it is possible to recognise the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts – a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character."[10] The unconscious, Freud tells us, does not admit the possiblity of our own death. The cinema, on the other hand, has made a specialty of spectacularising death in images in which our identification processes have invested a considerable stake. A sentence from "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915) specifies this extraordinary phenomenon that has become ever more commonplace since Freud wrote about it, ever more a constituent of fantasy experience : "In the realm of fiction we find the plurality of lives which we need. We die with the hero with whom we have identified ourselves ; yet we survive him, and are ready to die again just as safely with another hero."[11]

If on the side of desire we find that the "primal scene" of Oedipal sexuality is of particular insistance in the cinema, we might begin to ponder as well the spectator's imaginary place at the scene of violent death, or simply of violence on character or text. We might consider as a peculiar manifestation of this phenomenon the destructive violence attending the images of women that Mulvey has described and defined in terms of libidinal cathexis, of masculine sexual desire. Beyond the concepts of "desire" and "pleasure" lie the aggressive and self-destructive instincts which seem also served by the cinema. A consideration of the cinema in terms of the death instinct is needed to grapple with what Robin Wood calls "a spirit of negativity, an undifferentiated lust for destruction, that seems to lie not far below the surface of the modern collective consciousness."[12] The erotic function of the images provoking this "lust for destruction" is sensed in Wood's description of the audience "who cheered and applauded every one of [the] outrages"[13] committed in **The Texas Chainsaw Massacre**. What I think needs analysis is the extent to which the destructive satisfaction which is often or almost always combined with the erotic is primarily – unconsciously – experienced as self-destruction, as a limit to the constitution of the spectatorial subject. In the words of Jean Laplanche in **Vie et mort en psychanalyse**, one of the most important reconsiderations of the death instinct : "To fantasise aggression is to turn it into oneself, to commit aggression against oneself."[14]

The recent West German film **Christiane F.,** directed by Ulrich Edel, provides a focus for thinking this problematic process. It is **exposé** filmmaking of the most sordid kind, purporting to document a problem of modern life while spectacularising the degradation of a young girl involved with drugs and prostitution. Christiane's body and face are the scene of the process, the pages on which her suffering is written. A component of identification lies in assuming the pain to which she is subject, and which ends inexorably in an overdose of heroin in a railway-station toilet. There is virtually nothing in the film to set back and explain – sociologically, economically, or psychologically – the downward spiral of Christiane's life. What is provided for is the grim imagination of Christiane's pain, culminating in the astonishing moment of her apparent suicide.

Christiane's overdose is portrayed in a series of enormous close-ups of the apparatus as she prepares it, and of the needle puncturing her skin. The sequence leads to a moment of disoriented confusion as the girl who has been the object of our identification sinks out of frame and we are left without attachment in this harrowing, if imaginary, world. This full stop to the drama is succeeded by a long shot from the air of a peaceful German village surrounded by a wintry, rural landscape. This shot is accompanied by Christiane's voice off, telling us that she survived, was taken by her mother to her grandmother's house, and has been rebuilding her life far from the urban hell that is Berlin. The fantasy of self-destruction culminating in an impossibility that cannot be fantasised—identification with death— is swiftly, sentimentally recuperated as both idealised future and the nostalgic past of infancy. In a note in **The Interpretation of Dreams**, Freud says, "the belief in survival after death... merely repre-

sents a projection into the future of [the] uncanny life before birth."[15] The long take that ends the film provides a bridge for us over the instant of emptiness which removed Christiane from our sight and briefly cancelled the subjectivising work of identification.

Dying is often represented in the cinema, but representation and identification belong to libido not to the death instinct. The personification of death as a dark and melancholy figure in such a film as Fritz Lang's 1921 **Der Mude Tod (Destiny)** is so far from being a representation of the fact of death as to constitute a complete denial of it. The death instinct does not produce an image, it cuts across the image in a syncopation that voids the objects and process of identification, and to that measure it cuts across the coherence of the ego that the work of representation maintains. Nor does the death instinct picture and yearn for, as has sometimes been asserted, a return to a neo-natal or even womb-like state, except as these conditions provide images for the unimaginable by a sort of metonymy which places infantile helplessness next to the nothingness, the oblivion of death. This is the method of primary masochism, desire organised – according to Daniel Lagache – on the image of "the initial state of the infant, absolutely dependent on the other for satisfaction."[16] As desire pursues the object that cannot be had, only represented, similarly the death instinct pursues the state that cannot be represented, only alluded to, when "alloyed with eroticism".[17]

The cinema projects a violence upon the screen. It provides in this way the occasion for a turning outward and a re-engagement of destructive instinct that is aimed primarily at the self. "Masochism," says Freud, "is older than sadism."[18] The energetic search of sexuality for an object becomes the locomotive force of the death instinct, particularly insofar as the apparatus of the cinema is itself complicit in the implementation of sadomasochistic fantasy. The analogy between the film-viewer and the dreamer has often been made as the basis of an exploration of the experience of film-fantasy. Jean-Louis Baudry: "The cinematographic apparatus reproduces the psychical apparatus during sleep: separation from the outside world, inhibition of motricity; in sleep, these conditions causing an overcathexis of representation, can penetrate the system of perception as sensory stimuli; in cinema, the images perceived (very likely reinforced by the set up of the physical apparatus) will be overcathected and thus acquire a status which will be the same as that of the sensory images of dream."[19] Sleep, Freud himself suggests, induces a psychic regression toward the state of the pre-natal, infant in the womb.[20] Christian Metz argues that the use of such analogies takes the state of the filmviewer too far, and remove him too completely from real demands on the perceptions and ego, that the situation of the spectator is much more like that of the daydreamer who remains sensible to the world around him.[21] It seems to me that the cinematic apparatus has a much more explicit function, that it does not just provide the conditions for fantasising, that it is not the outside of fantasy but its very substance, that it is already fantasy, ready-made and of a particular order. In brief, the apparatus of the cinema is the social equivalent of the contraption – appliance, device, harness, rack – into which the classic masochist inserts himself in quest of gratification. In the restraints of the contraption the spectator finds a simulacrum of the helplessness in which desire was first precipitated out of need and satisfaction. Womb, cradle, mother's arms, it doesn't matter what the cinematic apparatus represents: the important thing is that it signifies that world against which the infant's energies have no purchase. The anxiety which the situation provokes may perhaps be thought of in terms of the trepidation with which we enter the cinema itself, looking at the faces of those who are released, for the image of the satisfaction which we hope to attain. In his meditation on the fictional film and its spectator, Metz speaks of being "in the grip of the filmic state",[22] of being paralysed. This description, I think, can be extended from the effect of the physical apparatus to that of the psychical via the perspective representation that controls and channels the path of vision. "The ascetic who flagellates himself does it for another," says Lacan.[23] To buy a ticket to the cinema is to surrender oneself to its clutching embrace, to let it do to us what it will, to provide it with our joy and pain, and in return to ask it for love. We become the objects of our images.

And the images turn their back on us. The "sense of separation" mentioned by Mulvey,[24] or the fact that, in the words of Christian Metz, the cinema "retains something of the forbidden nature of the sight of the primal scene,"[25] are emblematic of the engagement of desire and the death instinct. They offer us an insight into what Laplanche calls "the essentially traumatic nature of human sexuality,"[26] formed in the constant threat of the withdrawal of the attention that for the infant can never be constant enough, the threat of the disconnection from the other that must entail the collapse and extinguishing of self.

There are two sorts of death in the cinema of which I think it is important for us to take note. The first is exemplified, somewhat paradoxically, by a death we do not see: the death of McTeague in **Greed**. The end approaches him as he is slumped in the centre of a featureless desert, empty of everything save the corpses around him, to one of which he is chained. The peculiar horror of this death is that it is, in the film, unwitnessed; it is the death of the only being in the world, and for this reason, for what it threatens to the spectator, it is forestalled, left to an inevitability that is not yet. Or, like Jack's death in **The Shining**, it is elided by a cut, and redressed by the suggestion that life has simply been displaced, not terminated. Or, to take yet other examples, John McCabe surely dies of his wounds and exposure, but that final moment is masked for us by the snow that drifts over his body in the penultimate scene of **McCabe and Mrs. Miller**, in much the same way that Judith Traherne's death is both signified and obscured by the going out of focus that marks the end of **Dark Victory**.

As common, more so perhaps, are the executions that bring to an end films as disparate as **The Passion of Joan of Arc, King Kong, Rome Open City,** and **Bonnie and Clyde**. Here the fact that the death is seen – or the act of killing is seen – must be allied to the fact that witnesses to the event are included in the film itself, even if that witness is himself

An instance of libidinal cathexis in Stanley Kubrick's ***The Shining****; see Peter Baxter's "Death and Desire"*

the killer or one of the killed. Like ourselves, those witnesses are appalled/thrilled by what they see. As it is for us, the spectacle is occurring outside their control, but in a way that is for them real and immediate. They are themselves our mediators and our refuge. We are dealing here, I think, with a fundamental scene of the narrative cinema, towards which the narrative development of film after film is organised. Its psychical centrality can be judged from the fact that it puts an end to the film in which it appears. The narrative is the preparation for the death scene, the death scene being the **raison d'être** for the elaborate processes which provide access to it.

While the scene of death may be a particularly privileged element of fantasy in popular cinema, that place is surrounded by the much more diffuse and difficult to limit process of aggression. Aggression may not end in death for the characters most highly cathected by text and spectator, but it is the very condition of narrative, the imaginary disposition of conflict and struggle. It has become of special concern to feminist critics who deal with the placement of the feminine as the object of aggression. It seems to me that the precise social function and effect of the image of violence against women can be understood only if its relation to the broader sadomasochist fantasy is taken into account. There is in this sense a need to consider the identification process that a cinema founded on the "traumatic nature of human sexuality" brings into play. In Freud's own words on the acting out of sadistic fantasy: "While these pains are being inflicted on other people, they are enjoyed masochistically by the subject through his identification of himself with the suffering object."[27] The voyeuristic scene inscribes masculinity and femininity in terms of control and suffering, but it might be worth considering the extent to which this scene puts the very division of sexual identity in crisis if the foundation of the fantasy is not the infliction of pain but the suffering of it. Understanding this will not in itself change the actual power relationships of men and women in the real world, but it may clarify the fantasies that inhabit and inflect those relationships.

Laura Mulvey writes that women's image "has been stolen and used"[28] by the classic cinema in order to feed the voyeuristic processes which place the viewing subject in terms of sexual difference. But to state as she does that that image is "(passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man"[29] is to reduce to a simple opposition a process of fantasy that is conflictual and contradictory, and includes the sadistic satisfaction of identifying with the sufferer.

I want to refer specifically to **Rear Window**, since this is a film that Mulvey mentions.

Confined to his wheelchair, photographer L. B. Jeffries puzzles over events occuring in another apartment across the courtyard of his building. These events lead him to believe that a neighbour has murdered his wife. Jeffries' girlfriend Lisa goes to investigate that other apartment one evening, and while there she is discovered by the suspected man, only just managing to get away safely. Eventually Jeffries himself is accosted by the suspect, in Jeffries' own apartment, before the police arrive and save him. The fact that Jeffries' confinement to a wheelchair "puts him squarely in the phantasy position of the cinema audience"[30] is perhaps most important insofar as that place-in-common is one of helplessness that has been self-sought: Jeffries had his leg broken in trying to photograph an auto race. As Mulvey says, Jeffries does indeed eventually see his intrepid girlfriend guiltily trapped in the apartment of the man presumed to be the wife-murderer. It is here, however, that the most important shot of the film occurs, a pivot for the whole play of seeing, violence, and fascination. Observed by Jeffries through a pair of binoculars, the murderer looks up, unnoticed by Lisa and the police who are standing by, and returns Jeffries' gaze. It is a glance that cuts across the vision of our hero like a lightning bolt and hurls Jeffries back into the darkness of this apartment. It is a glance whose force redefines the film's articulation of desire, and leads to the consummation of the film and of the fantasy that has been taking shape both in Jeffries and in our uneasy identification with him. The murderer crosses unseen to Jeffries' apartment. We hear the last of his footsteps as he approaches the door. He finds Jeffries in the darkness, alone, helpless, and guilty – precisely – of being a witness. Jeffries defends himself by popping off a series of flashbulbs to dazzle the eyes of his attacker, but as the killer stumbles across the room the dominant point-of-view is that of the attacker as his brief instants of blindness clear and he closes in. It is through the eyes of the other that we see the terror of the character in whom so much of our emotion is invested.

Jeffries' life is saved by the timely arrival of the police, but not before he is heaved out the window by the murderer, and drops – in a shot from above, from the point of view of the murderer, a kind of shot that occurs time and again in Hitchcock's films – to the courtyard below, where he finds himself with a second broken leg and his head nestled contentedly in Lisa's lap. What is the cause of his contentment? Not, I would venture, where he is, but what he has come through, the culmination of the fantasy of the primal scene which has brought to fulfillment masochistic desire-in-suffering. In particular, it seems to reproduce the patterns of masochistic fantasy described by Freud in "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" (his study of the "Wolf Man"), and "A Child is Being Beaten": the male desire to replace the mother as the object of the father's attention, to suffer in the place of the mother, to solve the puzzle of the woman's brief cry in the night by hearing its echo in the sounds of his own voice.

Hence the film has removed two women from between Jeffries and the murderer/lover/father, a process that is of important consequences for our understanding of the signification of femininity, but the process has also so distressed the relation between masculinity and femininity as to make untenable any simple polarity of activity and passivity, seeing and being seen. It asks that we reconsider what the classical cinema seeks to accomplish in its combined representation of death and desire.

Queen's University

Notes

1/ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", **Screen,** Vol. 16, No. 3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18.

2/ Laura Mulvey, "Afterthoughts on 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' Inspired by DUEL IN THE SUN", **Framework,** Nos. 15-16-17 (Summer 1981), pp. 12-15.

3/ "Visual Pleasure", p. 15.

4/ Ibid.

5/ Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, **The Language of Psycho-Analysis,** trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London ; The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1973), p. 98.

6/ Ibid.

7/ Sigmund Freud, **An Outline of Psycho-Analysis,** In **The Standard Edition of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,** Vol. XXIII (London ; The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1954), p. 148.

8/ Quoted in Claire Johnston, "Towards a Feminist Film Practice : Some Theses", **Edinburgh '76 Magazine** (Edinburgh ; Edinburgh Film Festival, 1976), p. 54.

9/ Sigmund Freud, **Beyond the Pleasure Principle,** in **Standard Edition,** Vol. XVIII, p. 63.

10/ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny", in **Standard Edition,** Vol. XVII, p. 238.

11/ Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death", in **Standard Edition,** Vol. XIV, p. 291.

12/ Robin Wood, "An Introduction to the American Horror Film", in **The American Nightmare : Essays on the Horror Film,** ed. Robin Wood and Richard Lippe (Toronto ; Festival of Festivals, 1979), p. 22.

13/ Ibid.

14/ Jean Laplanche, **Vie et mort en psychanalyse** (Paris ; Flammarion, 1970), p. 155. My translation.

15/ Sigmund Freud, **The Interpretation of Dreams,** in **Standard Edition,** Vol. V, p. 400, n. 3.

16/ Cited in **Vie et mort,** p. 167. My translation.

17/ Sigmund Freud, **Civilization and Its Discontents,** in **Standard Edition,** Vol. XXI, p. 120.

18/ Sigmund Freud, **New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,** in **Standard Edition**, Vol. XXII, p. 105.

19/ Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus", trans. Jean Andrews and Bertrand Augst, **Camera Obscura,** No. 1 (Fall 1976), p. 122.

20. See Sigmund Freud, **The Interpretation of Dreams, loc. cit.,** pp. 542-547.

21/ See Christian Metz, "Le film de fiction et son spectateur (Étude métapsychologique)", in **Le signifiant imaginaire** (Paris ; UGE, 1977), pp. 121-175.

22/ Ibid., p. 143.

23/ Jacques Lacan, **Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse** (Paris ; Seuil, 1973), p. 167. My translation.

24/ "Visual Pleasure", p. 9.

25/ **Le signifiant imaginaire,** p. 91. My translation.

26/ **Vie et mort,** p. 162. My translation.

27/ Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes", in **Standard Edition,** Vol. XIV, p. 129.

28/ "Visual Pleasure", p. 18.

29/ Ibid., p. 17.

30/ Ibid., p. 16.

The Apparatus and the Avant-Garde

by William C. Wees

Increasingly, film theorists have recognized that a film's "meaning" is inseparable from the optical, chemical, mechanical and electronic processes that go into the making and showing of films. At the same time, there has been increasing interest in the spectator's role in the cinematic process, and this has raised a number of questions about the physical, perceptual and psychological conditions required for seeing, hearing and – even in the simplest sense – "understanding" a film. In other words, it is now recognized that no aspect of the making and viewing of films can be taken for granted or regarded as extraneous to an understanding of cinema in general or any film in particular.

This complex interrelationship of human and technological components constitutes "the cinematic apparatus" – a term given currency by Jean-Louis Baudry in the early 1970's.[1] It received its Anglo-American stamp of approval when "The Cinematic Apparatus" became the topic of a conference at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1978, and the subject of two collections of essays (one based on the 1978 conference) published in 1980.[2] ("Apparatus," it might be noted, has come to serve the purposes of two French terms : **l'appareil** and **le dispositif**. The former refers to the physical instruments, the technology and related processes required to make and show films ; the latter refers to the social machinery, the institutions of cinema, including the psychological and perceptual relationship between the spectator and the images projected on the screen.)

This recognition of the importance of the apparatus has come rather late, considering that avant-garde filmmakers have been subjecting the apparatus to close critical scrutiny for as long as there have been films that could be called avant-garde. That their critical analyses more often take the form of films than critical essays in no way diminishes their value or relevance. (This is not to overlook the many important writings by avant-garde filmmakers – above all, those of Vertov and Brakhage – but simply to suggest that the avant-garde taken as a whole has most thoroughly and incisively analysed the apparatus through its creative rather than its overtly critical work.) Certainly, within the realm of filmmaking itself, it is almost exclusively among the avant-garde that one finds films openly examining those aspects of the apparatus that dominant cinema tries to keep out of sight and off the viewer's mind.

Peter Gidal has demonstrated in detail how the work carried on at the London Filmmakers' Co-operative since the late '60s has been devoted to highlighting and analyzing various aspects of the apparatus – including the Co-op itself, as an "apparatus of experimental film."[3] Unfortunately, Gidal also creates the impression that only filmmakers committed to a materialist and Marxist point of view can make valid analyses of the apparatus (in this he represents the majority opinion among theorists of the apparatus), and that the only films offering authentic critiques of the apparatus are "structural/materialist" films (a category first designated by Gidal himself in the early 1970's). Yet, even these films seem to be open to Peter Wollen's complaint about avant-garde films that treat "means... as ends in themselves, as essences."[4] On the other hand, avant-garde films that succeed in integrating "means" and "ends" are likely to be dismissed as purely "formalist," because they do not seem to incorporate **within** the film an adequate ideological point of view **on** the film. Hence Bill Nichols' charge that what avant-garde filmmakers "commonly lack from a political perspective is an historical specificity to the reflexive or self-reflexive operations of their art...," and this, Nichols concludes, "leaves their challenge to an illusionistic tradition easily re-incorporated within an avant-garde tradition of formal innovation."[5]

I would like to argue, however, that "formal innovation" may, in itself, offer a valid analysis of the cinematic apparatus ; that, in other words, many avant-garde filmmakers have found ways to foreground the materialistic and ideological bases of the apparatus, without surrendering the "formal" considerations of film as an art form. It would seem more useful and more accurate to admit that in practice and sometimes (though less often) in theory, avant-garde filmmakers of many different ideologies, working in many different periods and styles have made incisive critiques of the apparatus, and that they have done so without sacrificing the **art** of film to the demands of **analyzing** film. In fact, it is precisely through calling attention to the apparatus that the avant-garde has

produced some of its richest themes, most far-reaching metaphors, and most successful works of art.

This work has been carried on in many different ways. One thinks of Le Grice, Rimmer, Landow and Sharits, among others, who have made the physical properties of the film and the processes of the optical printer a central concern of their films; of Michael Snow's explorations of camera movement, framing, duration and – particularly in **Rameau's Nephew**– the apparatus of sound in film; of the collage films of Connor, Vanderbeek, Lipsett, O'Neil, Razutis and others, which are as much expositions **on** editing, as they are examples **of** it; of Ken Jacob's explorations of perceptual relationships between audience and image through his manipulations of 3-D techniques; of the gallery installations and performance pieces that Iimura, Le Grice, Sharits, Snow and others have constructed around the apparatus of film projection; of the rapid montage, flicker effects and single-frame editing exploited by many filmmakers, including Kubelka, Conrad, Sharits, Breer and – much earlier in the history of the avant-garde – Léger and Vertov (I will return to these filmmakers and forms of analysis a little later); and, to end this admittedly incomplete list, one must take into account Vertov's whole critique of the apparatus carried out on behalf of "the camera eye," and Brakhage's equally thorough analysis of the apparatus growing from his affirmation of human vision.

Rather than extend the list with more names and unanalyzed generalizations, I will focus the rest of this essay on a few filmmakers and a specific aspect of the apparatus which has attracted their critical attention. The filmmakers are Brakhage, Vertov, Léger and the less well-known Keewatin Dewdney, whose **Maltese Cross Movement** (1967) is a gem of the Canadian avant-garde that has slipped into undeserved obscurity. What links these filmmakers is their analysis of film projection and how that projection is perceived by the audience. Thus, for the remainder of this essay, "the avant-garde" will be represented by these four filmmakers, and "the apparatus" by the projector and what it permits us to see.

Some views on the projector in Brakhage's **Metaphors on Vision** offer a good place to begin:

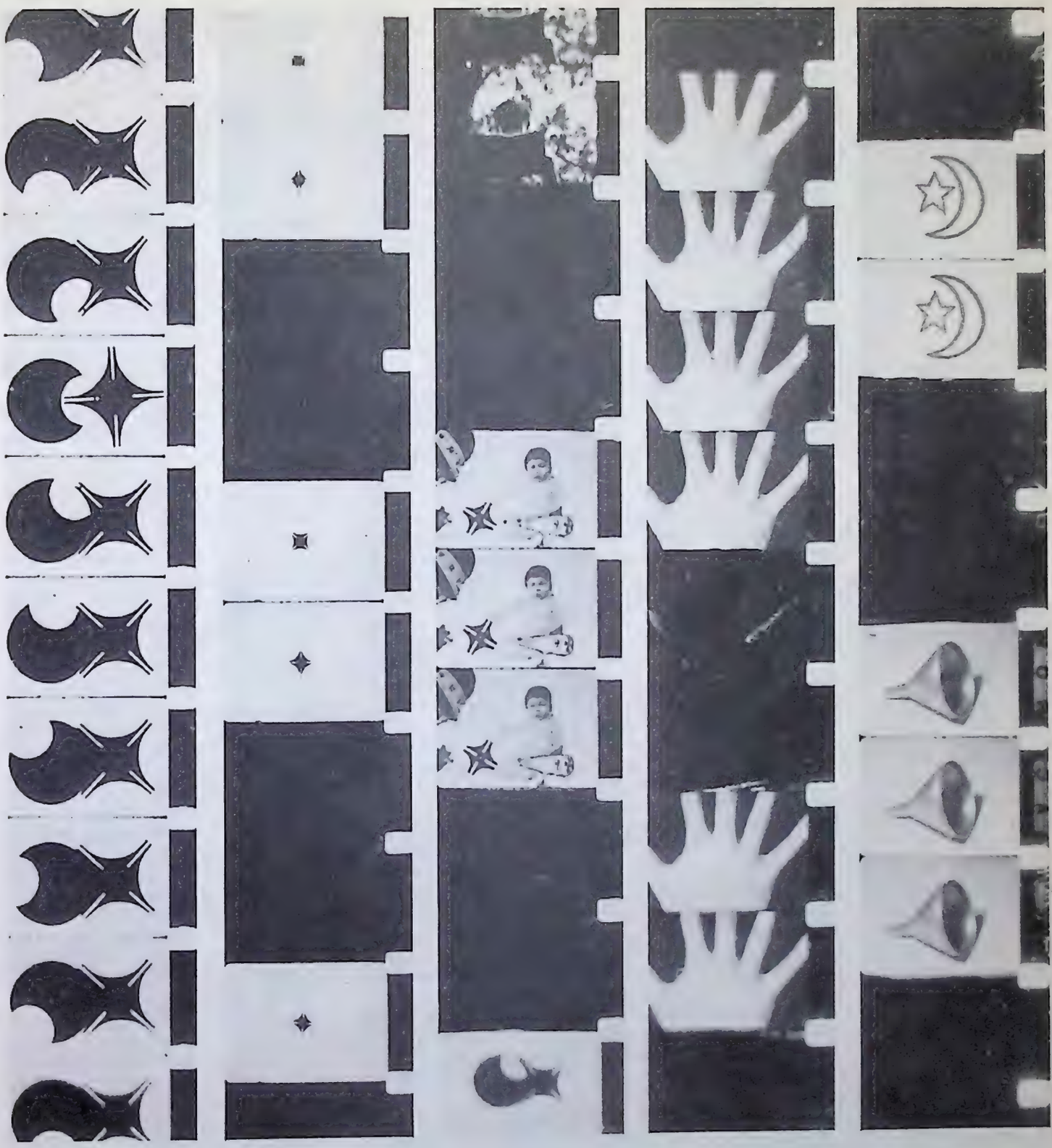
> What reflects from the screen is shadow play. Look, there's no real rabbit. Those ears are index fingers and the nose a knuckle interfering with the light. If the eye were more perceptive it would see the sleights of 24 individual pictures and an equal number of utter blacknesses every second of the show. What incredible films might ultimately be made for such an eye. But the machine has already been fashioned to outwit even that perceptibility, a projector which flashes advertisement at subliminal speed to up the sale of popcorn. Oh, slow-eyed spectator, this machine is grinding you out of existence... Believe in it blindly, and it will fool you – mind-wise, instead of sequins on cheesecloth or maxmanufactured make-up, you'll see stars. Believe in it eye-wise, and the very comet of its overhead throw from projector to screen will intrigue you so deeply that its fingering play will move integrally with what's reflected, a comet-tail integrity which would lead back finally to the film's creator. I am meaning, simply, that the rhythms of change in the beam of illumination which now goes entirely over the heads of the audience, would, in the work of art, contain in itself some quality of a spiritual experience.[6]

In Brakhage's film **Blue Moses,** that "beam of illumination" is presented within the film itself, and commented upon by the actor-protagonist of the film. Near the end of the film the actor says, "Don't be afraid! There's a filmmaker behind **every scene** – in back of ev-er-y wo-rd I spe-ak – behind you, too, so to speak..." And at that point, the camera swings around, as if seeking the filmmaker behind **us**, at the back of the room we are sitting in. What it finds is an image of what is, indeed, behind us in the room: a projector. We see a beam of light from a projector and next to it an indistinct figure moving his fingers in the light, as if making secret, occult signs – or shaping shadow images for the screen. The glimpse of the "filmmaker" (person and projector) is brief, and the camera returns to the actor who is saying, "No! don't turn around. It's useless." Then **he** turns around, presenting his naked back to us. The white rectangle of the projector's unobstructed light falls on him as he says, "You see!... **you** see my back; but if **I** could REALLY turn myself around and SEE – there would be nothing but the empty blaaaaaaack spaaaaaace... and that glarrrrrrring beam of illllllluuuuuuumination... those moooooooving strings pullllling, pullllllllllling. No – it's impossible!"[7]

Among the several levels of meaning that this sequence of **Blue Moses** is developing, is an analysis of the apparatus that takes into account the actor (as actor and as projected image on the screen), the screen itself and the space occupied by the spectator between the screen and the projector-filmmaker. Here that "glaring beam of illumination" becomes almost godlike in its control of what is – or is not – to be seen. "This machine... grinding you out of existence," in the words of **Metaphors on Vision**, does not display its mechanicalness, only its light: a "beam of illumination" in "empty black space," with "a shadow play" at one end, and at the other end, "the film's creator." In itself, the projector's light suggests "some quality of spiritual experience."

Given Brakhage's allegiance to the eye and to the powers of light, it is not surprising that he would epitomize the apparatus in the form of the projector's light; while the specifically mechanical processes of the apparatus are summed up in the dark phrase, "this machine... grinding you out of existence." For a counter-argument of equal eloquence, one can turn to Dziga Vertov who, like Brakhage, often formulated his views on the apparatus in terms of a dialectic between human vision and "the camera eye." But, in contrast to Brakhage, Vertov championed the latter, the "eye-machine" – though it is clear from his writings and films that for Vertov the "camera eye" was intended to refer to all the technology and production skills involved in filmmaking: the apparatus, in other words. Or, in his words, "the concerted action by the liberated and perfected apparatus and the strategy-making brain of man."[8]

The best example of that "concerted action" is **Man With a Movie**



Frame sequence from ***The Maltese Cross Movement*** *by Keewatin Dewdney. (A) Animation of the projector's Maltese cross movement; (B) Metrical montage reduced to its one-frame minimum; (C) A characteristic metrical montage sequence —the three frames of the child holding the Maltese cross is a detail from Dewdney's collage booklet which carries the same title as his film; (D) The discontinuous images of a hand are synchronized with a "laugh" on the sound track —*heh, heh*— derived from the first two sounds of the word "hand"; (E) The discontinuous images of Islam (moon and star) and a funnel are represented on the sound track by only the first sound of each word —a short* ı *and a* f *producing the word "if."*

Camera, a film that has been called, quite correctly I believe, "the cinema's most extensive and radical investigation of its own signifying processes."[9] It is an analysis – carried out in formal, filmic terms – of the cinematic apparatus, from the first stages of shooting to the final stages of watching a film in a movie theatre. It not only includes the equipment and work of cameraman, editor and projectionist, it also presents **itself** as film – as negative, work print and positive release print ; as a blurred strip running over the light panel of an editing bench, as individual, still frames and as frames projected in the normal way to produce the illusion of "life-like" movement ; as – in sum – the concrete, material stuff worked upon by machines and people, all of whom perform specific tasks, to accomplish defined goals. Those goals are shown to be analogous to the goals of all workers and all machinery : to help in "the struggle for the land of the Soviets, the struggle with lack of faith in Socialist construction."[10] Formally and ideologically, Vertov links the film's analysis of **itself** as apparatus with an analysis of **society** as apparatus, as a vast social machine composed of mechanical and human parts functioning together.

Ironically, what Vertov's detractors often criticized as the "formalism" of the film, are precisely those parts that offer visual equivalents of Vertov's analysis of the apparatus. Examples would be what Crofts and Rose call "montage crescendos" : those sequences of very brief shots, some of only one or two frames, which are edited on the same principle as Eisenstein's metrical montage of machinegun and gunner in **October**, but with more intricate patterns of rhythm and imagery. It is a kind of machinegun montage, fired at the eyes of the spectator – not to put them out, but to open them up to several different aspects of the apparatus. Besides undercutting naïve assumptions about the "reality" of the screen image, and drawing attention to the fact of editing itself and its manipulation of images, these sequences also refer to the frame-by-frame process of film projection – its "discontinuity," as Dewdney will call it – that normally passes smoothly and unperceived by the spectator.

Because of the rapidity of the cuts and the dynamic graphic relationships within and between each shot, one can almost feel these bursts of energy on the retina. (One is reminded of Peter Kubleka's definition of film as "the quick projection of light impulses."[11]) It is Vertov's way of letting us "see" the projector's mechanical operation, its frame-by-frame projection of the film and the off-on rhythm of its light (images of that "glaring beam of illumination" are also rapidly intercut with shots of the editor's eyes, traffic signals, trains, and other images in the final moments of the film). It is also Vertov's way of suggesting how the film apparatus engages the apparatus of our visual perception. For, what these sequences succeed in demonstrating is the underlying principle of flicker-fusion by, in effect, preventing the flickers from fusing. Under these circumstances, we can see objectively what under normal circumstances we see subjectively and so automatically that we do not notice its material and mechanical basis. Yet, without that process of flicker fusion, the whole apparatus would not work. Thus Vertov both displays and enlists the same sort of machine-human cooperation that has been the subject of his analysis of the social apparatus as a whole. Our visual system becomes yet another component of the apparatus, operating according to the same principles as those that underlie the projector, the camera, the machinery and "mechanical" movements that the film as a whole has shown to be the central driving force of "the land of the Soviets."[12]

A brief comparison with **Ballet Mécanique** is useful at this point. Though completely lacking the overt ideological references of **Man With a Movie Camera**, Léger's film, like Vertov's, uses machines and mechanicalness, not only for graphic and rhythmic purposes, but also to allude to the mechanicalness of the apparatus. Consider the famous shot of the washerwoman carrying her laundry basket up a flight of steps, which is loop-printed to appear twenty-one times (according to Standish Lawder's count[13]), with only two interruptions by other shots. Through the comic and disturbing mechanicalness of its precisely duplicated movement, this repeated shot alludes to the mechanical repetitiveness upon which the cinematic apparatus, like all machinery, is based. (It is similar to Vertov's repeated and speeded-up shots of the woman folding cigarette packets around a wooden block, but Léger's loop-printing technique more accurately expresses the apparatus' basis in "mechanical reproduction.")

Léger also uses very rapid montage, but with less of the flicker effect that Vertov's montage produces. Its effect is to draw attention to another perceptual process that our visual perception contributes to the apparatus : the **phi** phenomenon. The rapid montage makes static objects – bottles, for instance – appear to leap between two positions ; yet, the gap in time and space is just great enough that one almost, but not quite, sees them as simply **being** in alternate positions, rather than "moving" between them. This here-there-here-there rhythm is also a kind of metaphor for the intermittent movement of the film's advance through the gate of the projector, and the on-off-on-off projection of the image produced by the shutter.

The same process produces another effect when a white disk and a white triangle, both on black backgrounds, are juxtaposed in rapid alternation. The perceptual effect is to make the edges of the disk begin to flatten into a rounded triangle, and the triangle's straight sides to bulge and its corners to soften into slight curves. No such change is "in" the frames themselves. Léger has simply demonstrated how the apparatus of film projection and our visual apparatus work together to produce perceptions of transformation and movement.

Like a psychologist of perception, Léger has used an optical illusion to analyze the apparatus of visual perception, and as an artist, he has made that analysis serve the rhythms, the visual patterns and the theme of his film. And, like Vertov, he has integrated functions of both the cinematic and the perceptual apparatus, so that we do not simply observe them, we join in performing them. To watch the film, we must join our fellow apparatus in a mechanical **pas de deux**.

Kee Dewdney's **Maltese Cross Movement** carries on the tradition of **Ballet Mécanique** and **Man With a Movie Camera**, but in its own

comic and poetic way. The film reflects Dewdney's conviction that, as he wrote at the time, "the projector, not the camera, is the filmmaker's true medium."[14] Dewdney argued that, "The very use of the camera as a filmmaking tool has imposed the assumption of continuity on film," whereas, in his view, the essential, defining nature of film lies in its discontinuous projection of separate image-frames at a rate of 24 per second. Thus, it becomes the job of the filmmaker to reveal that discontinuity to the spectator and to use it creatively. Dewdney's primary example is Tony Conrad's **The Flicker**, which had just been presented at the Ann Arbor Film Festival, but his own major work of cinematic discontinuity was not based primarily on stroboscopic flicker effects, but on rapid metrical montage – of sound and image.

Moreover, the form and content of the film are shown to derive directly from the mechanical operation of the projector – specifically the Maltese cross movement which converts the continuous movement of the projector's drive shaft into the discontinuous movement of the gears that pull the film in front of the gate, hold it while the turning shutter permits the projector's light to flash through it, and then, in the darkness of the closed shutter, move the next frame into position to be exposed to the light... and so on, until the entire film has made its stop-go-stop-go journey through the projector.[15]

Dewdney's animation of the disk and the cross illustrates graphically (pun intended) the projector's essential parts and movements (accompanied by a rackety, mechanical clatter on the sound track). It also alludes to a dialectic of continuous-discontinuous movements that pervades the apparatus, from its central mechanical operation to the spectator's perception of the film's images : the circular disk at the end of the drive-shaft turns **continuously**, the cross which it engages turns **discontinuously** ; the film runs **continuously** from the lead reel to the take-up reel, except in the gate where its movement is **discontinuous**, and at that crucial moment, when the "beam of illumination" passes through it, the film is absolutely still ; if it is a sound film, then it must pass **continuously** over the sound head, synchronically with its **discontinuous** passage past the gate ; the film itself is a **continuous** strip of celluloid made of distinct, **discontinuous** frames ; the image projected on the screen and the perception of "movement" it produces in the "slow-eyed spectator" appears **continuous**, yet it produces that perception only because, in actuality, the projector is flashing **discontinuous**, static images on the screen (if they were **not** discontinuous, the spectator would only see a continuous blur) ; and finally, within the spectator's visual system, the perception of the film's images as being **continuous** is produced by **discontinuous**, off-on firings of nerve cells from the retina to the brain.

In addition to all this, Dewdney's sound track demonstrates that what we hear is also built out of continuous-discontinuous relationships – what we might call **continuous** "sets" of **discontinuous** "sub-sets" : sentences composed of phrases, phrases of words, words of discrete sounds or phonemes (the film itself is, of course, temporally constructed in the opposite "direction" : from sub-sets to sets). The film is organized around the principle that it can only complete itself when enough separate and discontinuous sounds have been stored up to provide the male voice on the sound track with the sounds needed to repeat the little girl's poem. (His response, "No," to her repeated question, "Are you ready ?" indicates that he has not yet acquired enough sounds to produce the continuous sequence of words which is the poem she will recite.) Then, even when he does repeat her phrases, we hear them as composed of the separate original sounds.

The poem itself alludes, playfully and ambiguously, to this whole continuous-discontinuous process of the apparatus :

> The cross revolves at sunset,
> The moon returns at dawn.
> If you die tonight,
> Tomorrow you're gone.[16]

Cross and moon : the mechanical parts of the projector's Maltese cross movement, but also the moon as the reflected light on the screen, which disappears as the cross turns while the shutter is closed (sunset), and returns after the shutter opens again (at dawn).[17] The sunset and dawn are paralleled in the last two lines by "tonight" and "tomorrow." If the movement does not occur in the dark (tonight), then another image will not be there when the light returns (tomorrow). Life and death, the poem also implies, are analogous to the frame-by-frame projection of the film : one moment you're there, the next moment, you're not. A grimly comic existential view : if I die, I'm gone (pronounced and pictured in the film as "gun").

This doesn't seem too far from Brakhage's grim machine "grinding you out of existence." In fact, though I began by emphasizing Dewdney's affinities with the Vertov-Léger approach to the apparatus, I also want to emphasize his affinities with Brakhage's approach. What Brakhage did with the projector's lamp, Dewdney has done with its Maltese cross movement : find in it metaphors that derive from, and refer to, the mechanical parts and operation of the apparatus, but that also apply to the total apparatus of producing and perceiving images, and even more broadly, to the apparatus of life itself. But then, such extensions and elaborations, which grow organically from the form and content of the work, are what one expects of a work of art, and that is what I have tried to argue is what Dewdney, Brakhage, Léger, Vertov and a host of other avant-garde artists have given us through their analyses of the apparatus.

McGill University

Notes

1/ Jean-Louis Baudry, "Cinéma : effects idéologiques produits par l'appareil de base," **Cinéthique**, No. 7-8 (1970) pp. 1-8, translated as "The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematic Apparatus," **Film Quarterly**, XXVII (Winter 1974-5), pp. 39-47 ; and "Le dispositif : approches métapsychologiques de l'impression de réalité," **Communications**, No. 23 (1975) pp. 56-72, translated as "The Apparatus," **Camera Obscura**, No. 1 (December 1976), pp. 104-26.

2/ Teresa Hak Kyung Cha (ed.), **Apparatus** (New York : Tanam Press, 1980), Teresa De Lauretis and Stephen Heath (eds.), **The Cinematic Apparatus** (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1980).

3/ Peter Gidal, "Technology and Ideology in/through/and Avant-Garde Film: An Instance," in De Lauretis and Heath, p. 155.

4/ Peter Wollen, "Cinema and Technology: A Historical Overview," in De Lauretis and Heath, p. 21.

5/ Bill Nichols, **Ideology and the Image** (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981), pp. 54-7.

6/ Stan Brakhage, "The Camera Eye," **Metaphors on Vision** (**Film Culture**, No. 30, Fall 1963), n.p.

7/ Quotations from **Blue Moses** are taken from the script included in a letter from Brakhage to Bob Benson (March 1962) reprinted in "Respond Dance," **Metaphors on Vision**, n.p.

8/ Dziga Vertov, "Selected Writings," **The Avant-Garde ; A Reader of Theory and Criticism**, ed. P.A. Sitney (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 5-6.

9/ Stephen Crofts and Olivia Rose, "An Essay Towards **Man With A Movie Camera**," **Screen**, XVII, No. 1 (Spring 1977), p. 31. Crofts and Rose have challenged "any attempt to read back into Vertov the concerns of current avant-garde practice," on the grounds that such efforts de-contextualize Vertov's work "in the name of avant-garde formalism" (pp. 18, 53). I argue, of course, that "avant-garde formalism" might be carried out in a thoroughly analytic spirit, and that it is possible to maintain a proper perspective on the historical and ideological context of Vertov's film, and, at the same time, recognize Vertov's affinities with other avant-garde filmmakers, whose analyses of the apparatus have also been labeled "formalist."

10/ Dziga Vertov, "The Vertov Papers," in Cha, p. 9.

11/ Peter Kubelka, "The Theory of Metrical Film," in Sitney, p. 140.

12/ While I agree with Crofts' and Rose's general argument that, "The film aims to take the spectator from a position of unreflective consumption of cinema to one of actively participating in producing the film's meanings...," (p. 15), I find their overall interpretation of the film (based on the premise that Vertov is making a critique of the Soviet government's New Economic Policy) rigidly simplistic. They do not do justice to Vertov's brilliant analysis of the cinematic apparatus **and** the social apparatus (of modern, urban, Soviet society), nor to his integration of the two, through which he reveals both to be based on the intricate interchange of human and mechanical energy.

13/ Standish Lawder, **The Cubist Cinema** (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1975), p. 152.

14/ Keewatin Dewdney, "Discontinuous Film," unpublished essay, dated 1967.

15/ Diagrams and a clear explanation of the projector's Maltese cross movement can be found in James Monaco, **How to Read a Film** (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), p. 74.

16/ The anonymous male voice on the sound track re-phrases the last two lines as, "If **I** die tonight,/Tomorrow **I'm** gone." Since the little girl always looks directly at the audience when asking, "Are you ready?" and while reciting her poem, the substitution of "I" for "you" implies that the voice is speaking on behalf of each of us in the audience. We are, after all, the only ones who have been hearing and storing up the sound fragments as the film progresses, thus it is only we who are "capable" of repeating the poem and bringing the film to completion. In this way, the film recognizes us – or, more precisely, leads us to recognize ourselves – as essential components of the apparatus.

17/ In Dewdney's privately printed collage booklet, **The Maltese Cross Movement** (1967), the cross and the moon are also associated with Christianity and Islam, and more specifically with the Knights of Malta and the Turks who laid siege to Malta in 1685.

Disciplining Film: Code and Specificity

by Paisley Livingston

Although film theory began with the very inception of the cinema, it has become the source of an intensified debate over the past decade, particularly in North America, where the reception of European methods has sharply divided opinion concerning the contributions of theory to the understanding of cinema. We have witnessed various polemics between the advocates of different theoretical tendencies, as well as a certain animosity between scholars favourable to theory and those who deny its validity as a whole. In order to assess the roles that theory might play in the future of cinema studies, I will address here some of the fundamental assumptions of film theory, focusing particularly on Christian Metz's early attempts to make semiology the basis of a rigorous, disciplinary science of film signification.

Film theory began as an apology for what Canudo had baptised as "The Seventh Art"; the discipline took its central topics, frequently in an unexamined manner, from aesthetics, asking if film was an "art" and what might distinguish this art from the others. It was deemed necessary to justify taking a serious interest in a medium that manifested obvious affiliations with popular and "illegitimate" forms of spectacle – the circus, side-shows, prestidigitation, etc. If film was indeed an "art" worthy of being placed alongside such "serious" forms as literature and the theatre, it was also held to be necessary to prevent cinema from simply imitating these established forms, as in the filmed theatre of the first "cinéma d'art" in France. Thus film theorists sought to discover the specific "expressive potentials" of cinema and championed the "pure" film said to draw uniquely upon the special virtues of the medium. In an ingenious and wholly tautological manner, Louis Delluc labeled this "essence" of the cinema "photogeny" – the genius of photography.

Although this term was quickly forgotten, the search for the essence of cinema continued to dominate film theory. The major texts in the literature largely hinge upon a single question, posed explicitly by the title of André Bazin's collected essays: **Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?** The responses to this query were diverse, for the cinema displayed contradictory essences to the theoreticians. Very briefly, the salient positions fall within two main tendencies. For Kracauer, Balázs, Bazin, Merleau-Ponty, and Mitry, the essence of the medium was its unprecedented ability to resemble phenomena – its "realism" or "redemption of physical reality." Others formulated an antithetical response: for the surrealists, Arnheim, Panofsky, Munsterberg – and to some extent Eisenstein – the essence of film was its ability to transform and interpret phenomena by means of montage, composition, and other cinematic devices. The debate between these two tendencies, although interesting, is in a sense secondary to the underlying interrogation: in both cases it was a question of identifying the essence of film and of building a normative aesthetics upon this foundation.[1]

Such were the most general contours of film theory as late as the 1960's, and it was this field of inquiry that semiology sought to transform. Surveying the literature in 1971, Metz clearly proposed to alter radically this situation, and marked off three historical stages in the reflexion on film. There had transpired, he noted, a long "eclectic" period in which a chaotic diversity of methods had been employed, producing interesting suggestions, some useful descriptions, but no definitive results – certainly nothing resembling a comprehensive and unified theory. The advent of his own discipline of film semiology would begin a second stage by initiating a rational division of topics and labours, a veritable Taylorism of the research. At some future point, the results of the investigations conducted under the general management of semiology could be synthesised in a truly unitary and "non-syncretic" knowledge of cinema.[2]

Metz's goal in his first two books was not to answer all questions concerning the cinema but to make a coherent map of the topics: to chart their relations and to determine which investigations could provide a ground for a rigorous knowledge. He proceeds, then, to a division of sets of facts related to cinema and of the corresponding topics of investigation. His procedure is explicitly topological, and the **divisio** is constructed, following the logic of elementary set theory, as a series of concentric circles the boundaries of which permit fundamental exclusions and inclusions. The outer circle is the "cinematographic," defined as the set of all possible facts – and

questions – related to cinema. Inscribed within this domain is the subset of the "filmic," that is, those facts and topics pertaining specifically to films considered as texts. These filmic or intrinsic topics are further subdivided into two sets, the "cinematographic" and the "extra-cinematographic," what is specific to film (**le propre** du cinéma) and what is in films but not specific to the cinema – a distinction that corresponds to Jakobson's notion of the literariness of literature. Film semiology, Metz contends, finds its specific object of study and starting point in the inner circle of those facts defined as the "specifically cinematographic filmic facts."[3] In other words, one of the most basic concepts of film semiology will be established by the distinction between specific and non-specific properties of the cinema, and hence the new discipline would appear to return to the oldest topic of film theory to the extent that this notion of specificity resembles the concept of essence. Such a resemblance is indeed quite apparent when Metz notes that the word "specific" calls to mind two ideas : "what is specific is what does not exist elsewhere, and is also what, in its very sphere of existence, is felt as being defining **(définitoire),** non-interchangeable, and not accidental."[4] To distinguish, within the spere of the existent, between the interchangeable, non-defining, and the accident **(sumbebekos),** on the one hand, and the defining type **(genos),** its differentia **(diaphora),** specific substance **(ousia)** and property **(idion),** on the other, is indeed to formulate an essential definition **en bonne métaphysique** – even if the term "specific" stands in for "essence," even if Metz, in the same context, refers unfavourably to specialists who, in a "sublimated form of corporatism," are too eager to erect as an "essence" a specificity that is in fact "une fluctuation de la tendence" (for to speak of **the** tendency still involves an essence, even if – or rather because – a certain fluctuation is included as being more than accidental).[5] The strategy of the essential definition is not abandoned so easily, and Metz's attachment to it will concern us at greater length in the "proper" place.

It would be at once premature and unfair to suggest that Metz left the field of film theory – its instituted methods and guiding questions – intact. He did not ask if film was "an art," nor did he erect a normative theory based on some definition of the essentially cinematic, although some critics claim that this emphasis on narrative film amounts to such a position. Rather, Metz proposed to replace these outdated questions by asking how the film viewer understands a film. This is equivalent to deciding that the object of film semiology is to discover the determinant conditions of film signification, and further implies that the answer to this question would represent a real contribution to the problem of knowing "what cinema is." To decide in this manner that the essence of film is **semiosis** may itself be a limitation, but it would be premature to decry it as such at this point.

Metz did not embroil himself in the debate over the "realism" of film and clearly understood the cinema as a form of discourse, the supposed referentiality of which was held to be the product of its operation as a sign system. Hence he adopts an assumption fundamental to semiology as a whole, an assumption made explicit by Eco when he declared that "if the addressees understand, it means that below their understanding there exists a code. If we can't manage to get hold of it, that doesn't mean that there's no code at all, but rather that it still has to be found."[6] In keeping with this assumption, Metz's semiology of film is indeed a search for the code or codes that are responsible for the viewer's understanding of films, just as the subject's conscious or unconscious reliance upon the rules of language **(la langue)** was held, following Saussure, to be the condition of competent speech **(la parole)** and of its understanding. What, then, is the code constitutive of film signification ?

Metz defines a code as a "system of correspondances and oppositions **(écarts)** that, by definition, is made to serve several times and to remain identical to itself through numerous messages."[7] This definition both resembles and diverges from a more technical definition of the term in communications theory, where a code is "an agreed transformation, usually one to one and reversible, by which messages may be converted from one set of signs to another."[8] The Morse code, for example, is an invented formal system that supplements another, pre-established sign system, namely, that of "natural" language, without which this code could have no independent operation or coherence since it is a secondary system of transformation based on this first "set" of signs. Metz appears to retain one aspect of this technical definition, for he writes that a code "is made to serve," implying a degree of consciousness in the invention of the signs and of their transformational rules that is absent in the case of the cinema, which although it is an invention, was never lucidly and systematically based on another set of signs as an "agreed transformation." In spite of this trace of the technical definition, Metz's concept of the "code" of cinema is synonymous with the notion of "sign system."

"System," which figures in Metz's definition of code, is itself defined as "an orderly and integrated whole."[9] The code, with its "correspondances and oppositions," is indeed held to be systemic in this sense, for Metz describes a code as a "whole formed of a paradigmatic and a syntagmatic articulated together."[10] A code is a system of rules that governs the linear disposition of the film sequence as well as the sets of choices that are possible at any given position along the discursive chain. The guiding premise here is that a film cannot transmit signification to the spectator – and will not, in fact, be a coherent message – unless the individual texts conform to the systemic rules of the code ; this does not mean that each message fully repeats the code, but it does imply that the differences of the individual texts are constrained by their necessary correspondance to a set of relations that makes possible the viewer's reception of signification. This guiding premise contains a dual imperative : the film must be made in a manner obeying the ordering principles of a pre-existing system/code, and the spectator must rely – consciously or unconsciously – upon this code in the deciphering of the individual message or film.

Or perhaps we should say that this dual imperative must be satisfied if **this** notion of code – and the related and more fundamental con-

ception of the systemic nature of signs – is to be held to be applicable to film signification : film semiology must demonstrate that a system of invariant rules is operative in film texts and in their reception. Yet when we move further into Metz's argument we discover that he makes no effort along these lines, that he does not believe that a single code or grammar governs or orders film signification. The cinema, he contends, is not a "langue" in the sense of a unitary semiotic system, for there is always a plurality of codes at work in any given film. Metz therefore distinguishes between general cinematic codes and individual textual systems : the "orderly and integrated whole" implied by his very definition of code cannot be located at the level of the **cinema in general** but exists only for individual films.

The question that Metz raises here, but does not fully confront, is whether this acknowledgement of "pluricodicity" in any way vitiates his guiding analogy between the cinema and those semiotic systems having a single code that remains identical to itself across messages. If the diverse codes organising different films are not invariant, in what sense can they maintain the status and function of a sign system offering rules of usage and competence to a variety of subjects in a diversity of situations ? If the code is not a whole, identical to itself, if the only orderly wholes are the messages themselves, does the code retain its necessary relation to meaning ? Metz goes on to describe a curious interaction between individual films and the codes, an interaction that is wholly inimical to his stated definition of code :

> It is true that a code – **one** code – at a given moment of its historical evolution, functions as a closed system that offers choices that can be listed and that authorises syntagmatic combinations that are themselves innumerable... On the contrary, in the overall structure of a given text, no code – not even those that the text "mobilises" – plays a central role. What properly "makes" the system of a film is the **passage** from one code to another ; each film is constructed **with** diverse codes, and the important resides in this "with."
>
> With diverse codes, but also **against** them. In this sense every film is built on the destruction of its codes. It is not enough to note that in a filmic system each code is inessential because only their combination is essential ; beyond this it is necessary to see that the specificity **(le propre)** of the filmic system is actively to render irrelevant each of its codes.[11]

The notion that specific textual systems are constituted by the destruction of external codes and the affirmation of their own "logic" therefore vitiates the "pacific" relation between code and message in which the former lends its order and rules to the latter. As thrilling as this may be for theories of textual revolution, the conclusion that should be drawn here is that if the signification of films can still be said to depend upon sign relations of a systemic nature, this signification cannot be said to be governed or made possible by a set of pre-existing rules that it would simply actualise, refer to, or make manifest. The conditions of meaning are no longer provided by a code or system, but involve a curious patchwork of regularities that can be presented to the spectator for the first time by a new film, which therefore makes sense without modeling its system on a pregiven "orderly and integrated whole formed of a paradigmatic and a syntagmatic." Does this mean finally that a film's signification is conditioned by nothing other than its own individual logic or unity, by its "organic form" or some such ? Where is the more general, invariant code at this point ? We must begin to wonder what sense it makes to speak of codes in the cinema if they are not rules to be followed, but are on the contrary "rules" created and destroyed with each new film. (We might just as well speak of stylistic patterns, motifs, or similarities.) The concept of code is indeed fluctuating here : the codes of "cinema in general" become, in Metz's words, a "methodological abstraction" that is "inessential" and "irrelevant" to the question of how a given spectator understands a given film. Certainly these fragmentary patterns can be "abstracted" for the purposes of analysis, but they can no longer be said to condition film signification in general for they are in each instance completely overdetermined by the textual system that dissolves the orderly nature of the code by replacing it within the orderly whole of its own system.

What becomes of the object of semiology ? From an attempt to isolate the invariant features of films and their common conditions of meaning as a sign system we are led to an unbridled emphasis on the singularity of individual films, which now have in common only their specificity as different textual systems : films are the same insofar as they are all different. As no general discourse can specify the rules developed **ad hoc** by a diversity of particular and irreducible systems, the "science of signification" threatens to become a mere bricolage. This might seem an admirable state of affairs if we did not still suspect that films and their audiences are not all singular, and that Metz's strategy of analysis may have prevented us from attending to the types of regularities that are indeed at work in the determination of film signification.

Why was Metz led to fragment his own concept of sign system into a plurality of codes, each of which, by failing to remain identical to itself across messages, betrays the very definition of code ? Is the notion of an invariant law-like system simply inapplicable to the cinema ? Or was this tendency dictated by the particular manner in which Metz formulated his semiology ? Another examination of Metz's **divisio** will indeed reveal the reasons for his curious manipulation of the notion of code, and will prepare us to assess some of the alternatives.

It is important to understand that Metz's formulation of the concept of codification is intimately related to his emphasis on the specificity of cinema, so much so that the status of the one concept is directly influenced by that of the other. We must remember that once Metz had distinguished between extrinsic and intrinsic topics (isolating film **texts** as objects of study), he hastened to isolate, within the filmic texts, the specifically "cinematic" codes. The implications of his connexion of the notions of code and specificity are crucial, and can only be weighed by attending to the results of Metz's attempt to determine the specificity of cinema.

Metz refers to the concept of the specificity of film as "une notion gigogne" – a multiple stage or unfolding notion, just as "une table gigogne" is a series of embedded tables – and we should also recall here that "la mère gigogne" had so many children that she knew not what to do.[12] This remark is singularly pertinent because the concept of film specificity escapes each of Metz's attempts to determine it and always withdraws into an ever-narrowing circle. Metz in fact found it impossible to locate the specificity of cinema with any measure of exactitude, although such a realisation, which is marked here and there in even his earliest writings, was never elevated to the status of a conclusion. Metz constantly spawns specificities of film while moving on to deny them this status : the concept is declared to be "relative" yet "maintained." For example, in his search for specifically cinematic codes he focused on the syntactical rules by which large sequences of filmic narratives are brought into order, and isolated as one of the major figures of his "grand syntagmatic" – the parallel montage in which a discourse alternates between two or more story sequences – the example being **Intolerance** with its cutting back and forth between four parallel stories occurring in widely divergent historical epochs. Although Metz duly registers the "parallel syntagm" as part of a cinematic code, he goes on to admit that this figure of parallelism is by no means specific to film :

> There evidently remains a problem, which is that the cinematographic language itself, as a set of arrangements, must certainly be under the influence of various socio-cultural codifications : just as the "filmed motif" carries with it into the film the meaning it had outside the film, so do the types of filmic arrangement necessarily refer in one manner or another to schemes of intelligibility received in society. Thus, parallel montage is a properly cinematic figure, but we do not conceive, inasmuch, that it could have been accepted in the cinema in a society that would not **already** know (by its language, writings, "logic," etc.) the symbolic and intelligible value of certain very general **types of relations** such as alternation, parallelism, antithesis, etc.[13]

Such considerations lead Metz into a tangled discussion of the degrees of specificity of various codes. If a code is a logical or relational system of intelligibility, an informational pattern capable of being manifested in a variety of languages, then it can hardly be said to be specific to any one of them. In this case, what could be said to be specific to any language would be its manner of combining various non-specific codes, which is the conclusion reached by Emilio Garroni, who deems the specificity of cinema to be its absence of specificity, its ability to combine within itself all possible cultural codes.[14] Metz resists such a conclusion, perhaps because it maintains the concept of specificity in an empty gesture, clinging to its form but voiding it of its contents and applicability. Metz holds to the necessity of giving the specificity of cinema a positive content, and changes his strategy of definition in an effort to do so.[15] A code, he goes on to suggest, may not be only a relational logic, but can also be bound essentially to the "material" nature of a specific system of signifiers.

A technical discussion of Metz's altered strategy of defining specificity would involve his reading of Hjelmslev and would focus in particular on the concept of "substance" as the fusion of "form" and "matter" in both "content" and "expression."[16] More generally, however, Metz tries to salvage the notion of specificity by detaching it temporarily from his previous definition of code as a formal system of relations and by anchoring both code and specificity in the material and technical bases of the different media – which are clearly different at this level. Thus, if the cinema shares a certain iconicity with painting, and shares even its photographic images with still photography, it does not share its sequential ordering of moving photographic images – and the relations it establishes between these images and sounds – with any medium other than television. Once Metz has established that such differences between the media exist, he returns to the concept of code, asking if certain codes depend on these "pertinent" traits of the media for their manifestation. If a code can only be set in motion in moving pictures juxtaposed to a sound track, then it can truly be said to be specifically cinematic. Such an analysis is satisfactory in that it corresponds to our common sense that cinema is not "the same" as the other media, but it does not leave the notions of code and signification intact and is consequently quite unsatisfactory at this level. In any case, Metz freely grants that the cinema has been invaded and overdetermined, historically, by a host of extra-cinematic codes that owes nothing to the specific traits of the medium, an admission which amounts to saying that the rescued specificities are still largely irrelevant to the question of how spectators understand films. This is the question that Metz posed to himself, and although no one should advocate remaining oblivious to the specific features of the cinema **as a medium,** the answer to this question cannot be found by focusing on these features. Why then does Metz spend so much time on the topic of specificity, allowing it to alter the most basic premise of his semiology, that is, the assumption concerning the systemic nature of signs, their production of meaning not by means of "physical features" but through relations of opposition and difference that are not motivated or determined by some essential substance of the signifier ? For we have observed how Metz has twice emphasised specificity at the expense of his own definition of code, first of all by stressing the specificity of the systemic combination of extra-cinematic and cinematic codes in individual films, and secondly by discovering specificity not in codes but in their dependence on material features of the medium. In both cases the notion of code loses its status as the determining condition of the signification received by the spectator, for in the first instance it is no longer a pre-existing model of competence identical across messages, and in the second, not a matter of messages at all, but a question of media. I may be permitted to say here that the medium is neither the message nor the code : for example, the figure of parallelism employed in **Intolerance** could be equivalent to the same figure, used to transmit the same ideology in

another medium, **at the level of signification,** which is the level of a semiological analysis.

If the topic of specificity does not lead to the conditions of filmic signification, but is "irrelevant" to this problem, why should Metz make it the basis and guiding thread of his texts? This question involves a problem fundamental to semiology and to the notion of the "human sciences" as a whole. Metz expressly wants his new discipline to be a science and purports, for example, to replace mere "sayings" with rigorously defined "terms." And how are the terms and procedures of a science of signification to be established? Metz's response involves still another "propriety": "What is proper to the most coherent and assured methods is to create, by their existence, the most clearly delimitable 'objects'."[17] Although Metz's **divisio** of topics may appear reductive and overly schematic, his inscription of sets within sets, his definition of terms by means of exclusions and inclusions, is no simple error insofar as every effort to determine rigorously the meaning of a term must repeat these very gestures. To identify something is always and necessarily to assign it to a set and to differentiate it from those things that are not members of this set: to identify and to determine is to draw a line, to mark off one space from another, to delimit, decide, separate, and place; what is determined **(peras)** is delimited by a boundary, and the indeterminate is what is unbounded **(apeiron).** If in attempting to establish a **science** of film signification, Christian Metz seeks the specificity/essence of cinema and thereby returns to the first topic of film theory, he in fact repeats a procedure far more ancient than any discussion of the cinema. The necessity of this procedure is stated as early as Aristotle, who in distinguishing between science and rhetoric suggests that a science is a discourse having topics of its own, **idioi topoi;** rhetoric, being on the other side of the boundary, is an **art** dealing with commonplaces, **koinoi topoi.**[18] We should note here that the **topoi** discussed by Aristotle designate, as they do in Metz, both the objects being discussed and the terms or arguments used to designate them: just as an essence or identity is distinguished from what it is not, so is an autonomous discourse dealing with this class constituted by the same gesture. To the specific, determined object corresponds the specific discourse that will master and "know" it. A whole series of disjunctions follows, or rather, is created in the same stroke. Rhetoric will be excluded from the circle of autonomous sciences as a vague collection of sayings, devices, and arguments capable of being used by anyone to discuss anything; science, a realm of exact entities and relations and of the exact language used to designate them, is disjoined from the public sphere of discourse where only the conditions of persuasion (**ethos** and **pathos**) – if not force **(bia)** – settle the question. Truth is disjoined from opinion; realms of necessity – where determined entities are governed by law **(nomos)** – are disjoined from realms of accident and contingency.

Are we to fault Metz for attempting to achieve the goal of exactitude and rigour that was to distinguish the terms of film semiology from the mere sayings of previous film study? Is he to be blamed for hoping to constitude a **discipline**, that is, an exact knowledge finding its basis in an autonomous and specific object of study shared by no other discourse? If Metz is not responsible for the division between science and rhetoric handed down at least since Aristotle, is he at fault for choosing, or for attempting to choose, the status of science for his discourse? Or is it only the particular manner in which this was done – and not the more fundamental method – that is to blame for the failure? For it is indeed a matter of a failure here, in that Metz's attempt to delimit and know the specificity of film signification proved to be an impossible effort to separate the cinema from the general field of signification to which each "specificity" was necessarily related. It is a failure insofar as his autonomous and essential object of study consistently revealed itself to be "inessential" and "irrelevant" to the larger questions that it was his stated task to address. It is a matter of a failure that was prefigured even in Metz's earliest texts by such remarkable passages as the following:

> whether we wished it or not, we find ourselves referred to the thousand winds of culture, to the confused murmurings of a thousand other voices **(paroles):** the symbolism of the human body, the language of objects, the system of colours (for colour films) or the voices of chiaroscuro (for black and white films), the meaning of clothing, the discourse of the landscape... In all of these cases, in all those that we forget, the study (which is indispensible) of the properly filmic operation of such significations will not furnish us with the essential paradigms: these major figures that create meaning and humanity will remain caught up in culture, where they will have to be illuminated by some very general deep semantics – even if their scattered emergence in films contributes, in turn, to remodel them partially.[19]

What becomes of the science of film signification when it can no longer anchor itself and find its exactitude in a clearly defined object, but is on the contrary dissolved within an incessant sending back and referring which leads it, against its will, to the signification of culture "as a whole," to "winds" and "murmurings" that appear to obey no rules or codes? In Metz's own terms, the loss of such a "clearly delimited object" would render the method as "incoherent" and "uncertain" as these winds and murmurings; but on the other hand he suggests that beneath it all there might still be a hidden code, a set of "essential paradigms," whose hiddenness does not mean that they are not there, but merely implies, following Eco, that we have yet to find them. Metz's suggestion that a "semantics" will find these "major figures creating meaning and humanity" will concern us in a moment, but we must ask at this point a more general question raised by this passage: can there be a **general** science of signification, or must film theory – along with the theory of literature and culture in general – accept its status as rhetoric, as mere sayings among a thousand other voices, and perhaps no less "confused" than them?

One tradition, that is quite vocal in the contemporary debates over textual theory – even when it is a matter of silent and inarticulate **resist-**

ance – would have it that semiology and the "sciences humaines" were misconceived from the start precisely because there can be no science of culture : science finds its objects and its very condition as science in law-like regularities and invariances, while history and culture involve singular events that obey no such rules, for particularities are, following Aristotle once again, "infinite" and cannot be the subject of a true science.[20] Science can construct and attain exact knowledge of autonomous zones of determination within which various entities and relations are governed by law ; the humanities, because they deal with individual facts that do not recur, cannot discover general, binding conditions and regularities. Such a conception of the fundamental division between the sciences and the humanities is extremely widespread, and receives a concise expression, for example, in Windelband's distinction between idiographic and nomothetic discourses.[21] It follows from such a division that to the extent that theories in the humanities imitate the model of exactitude found in the sciences, they will employ – quite unsuccessfully – a method wholly inappropriate to the nature of their objects. Consequently, particularism, practical criticism, and careful historiography – as properly idiographic pursuits, modestly individual in their means and aims – will be opposed to the misplaced abstractions of pseudo-scientific theorising about culture, where there is no universal **nomos** to be analysed. Interestingly, this dominant particularism in the humanities is institutionalised in the form of disciplinary specialisation and expertise : the individual facts and events are sorted out and governed by discrete "authorities" who hold such a status not by virtue of a scientific knowledge of a particular domain – which is by definition impossible to idiography – but by virtue, it would seem, of **memory** alone, the ability to retain a sufficiently formidible quantity of the infinite particularities – a campaign doomed to failure, yet a holding action nonetheless.

In response to this position, we might begin by posing a series of questions, to which its proponents must in each case answer in the affirmative if they are to remain consistent. Are all films absolutely singular ? Can we assert that there are no genres, no significant resemblances between narratives, no identifiable types of films ? Are all film viewers absolutely different – do they perceive and understand films in radically divergent manners at all times ? Can we affirm that there are no law-like regularities in a given society, no institutions or rules maintaining certain necessary relations ? Is it the case, for example, that there are no conditions that determine the making, distribution, and reception of films ? Are films uncodified, in general, and as individual texts ?

We should note here that if Aristotle distinguishes between science and rhetoric, he nonetheless characterises the latter as a domain of generalities having a systemic nature : the **same** arguments and devices are employed in a variety of situations that bear certain resemblances to each other ; what is most singular in this scheme is the particular moment of the application of a rhetorical device, the **kairos**. Yet even these propitious moments constitute a **genos**. In this sense, an "idiographic" discourse about a particular event does not free itself from generality, just as the affirmative responses to the above questions all assert that particularity holds **in general** for the cinema and culture. If historiography, for example, purports to deal with particular facts and non-recurrent events, its descriptions will nonetheless bind these together by means of more general assumptions concerning the bases of societal organisation and disorganisation ; it will evoke, in even the most minute description of details, the factors responsible for historical change or stability ; failing this, idiothetic history will call upon general notions of what is probable – a **vraisemblable**, if not a more or less explicit idea, of "human nature." Idiography, then, is either impossible or exceedingly trivial, as Mandelbaum, who is no advocate of totalising theories of history, seems to suggest : "Historical inquiries do not ever proceed without at least an implicit acceptance by the historian of one or another set of theoretical commitments – as Werner Sombart remarked, 'No theory, no history.'"[22] Consequently, factual film history or practical criticism will not be the alternatives to film theory, which will be present, if only implicitly, in such activities. If Metz's attempt to construct a science of film signification was a failure, we cannot turn to an empirical approach purporting to deal with unconstructed singularities or purely factual data.

A second position, one that is again quite prevalent in contemporary debates, would accept the science/rhetoric division and freely acknowledge that every discourse on cinema or culture can claim only to be a matter of persuasion. This is a position of great strength, and of great impotence, for its very strength undoes itself. If no statement about film can pretend to any real validity or truth, if each position can be shown to be composed of various arguments or devices founded on nothing more than persuasion or force, then what is the validity of this position itself ? Its purposed status as a metalanguage stating the conditions of all other discourse is itself untenable since this view denies precisely the notion of a binding or axiomatic system assigning value to other discursive practices or "language games," that are held to be absolutely "heteromorphic."[23] The consequence of a radical scepticism is an equally radical scepticism about its own position – an argument that holds, of course, only for those who believe in the consequence of argumentation, preferring it to "l'agonistique générale." One cannot move into this position and consistently add that "terror" belongs entirely to the side that seeks to impose binding norms on discourse ; for the complete absence of such norms, the rejection of any notion of justice founded on either validity, dialogue, or consensus, leads directly to the unrestrained terror which is the agonistic itself.[24] The contemporary forms of sophism become particularly inconsequential when they purport to ascribe their own indeterminancy to the sciences **as a whole**, moving across the boundary in the opposite direction to pretend that science joins rhetoric as a collection of mere sayings. To contend in this manner that **all** of the sciences have failed to construct a rigorous and determined knowledge of the objects and relations that they have delineated for themselves is simply to ignore the results that particular

sciences continue to demonstrate in a consistent and universal fashion. The results, at given levels and within given domains of description, are indeed quite certain and law-like, and achieve a validity that is related, but not reducible to a consistent efficacity of application. Our far-sighted modern sceptic goes on wearing his eyeglasses – without which he would be incapable of even reading texts – yet hastens to deny the validity of optics and the various knowledges that made possible the construction of the very eyeglasses through which his sceptical gaze is focused.

It is another, and important, matter to point out that the exactitude of specific scientific discourses has its limits, that the islands of determination are precisely islands won at the price of radical exclusions – or "substructions," to evoke Husserl, who has most extensively demonstrated what is expelled in the founding gesture of quantification at the heart of the classical sciences.[25] More generally, every zone of determination constructed by an exact science, every boundary within which necessary conditions are identified, is related, in an equally necessary manner, to a vast series of relations and variables that are excluded from consideration as being non-pertinent, unnecessary, and contingent. If we are not interested in the naïveté of "pure" idiography, or in the reductive paradox that is the sole consequence of scepticism, we must seek to ask what is gained and lost, what is known and left unknown, by any given boundary of determination. One must pay a rather high price, for example, for quantification in the domain of cinema studies – and in the field of communications in general – for what is excluded in the construction of exact statistics and figures is most likely to be the type of factors that would enable us to address the questions that responsible inquiry in these domains would wish to answer. An assiduous social scientist can compile, for example, a reasonably exact set of statistics about the audience of a film or films, identifying the number of spectators, their age, social status, average income, frequency of attendance, and so on, but these data would reveal nothing significant about the audience's reception of the film – its meanings for them, the conditions of their choice to see this or that film, etc. Questionnaires pertaining to these issues could be distributed, and could be formulated in a manner permitting an eventual quantification of the responses, but the questions employed would themselves already involve a host of theoretical assumptions about the pertinent factors of the film experience and audience preferences. Scientists in a variety of fields speak more and more today of the responsibility involved, on the part of the observer, in the choice and delimitation of a manner and field of observation. Can the "humanities" afford to fail to do likewise, persisting in a failed imitation of a science that may no longer prevail today, and that may only have existed as Laplace's dream of a universal determinism?

If such are the two most salient alternatives to the goal of a science of signification, we must ask what lines of inquiry are open to a semiology (or other method) that would be aware of the limits and costs of its determinations. A different approach to the topics of film theory can be sketched here by referring to the semiotic program as it was formulated by Charles Morris.[26] Morris' first premise is that the conditions of the possibility of meaning are a matter of rules, just as Metz and others stress the necessity of codification for the signification of film. Morris, however, explicitly distinguishes between different types of rules, types that are only addressed by Metz in an unsystematic manner. Briefly, Morris distinguishes between three "levels" of semiosis, three orders of relations linking the sign, its user, and its designatum or denotatum. Syntactics, he stipulates, concerns the orderly relations between signs; semantics pertains to the rules governing the relations between signs and what they stand for; pragmatics concerns the relations between signs and their users.

Morris, then, identifies three different types of rules at work in sign systems. The relations between them are not entirely clear in his article, for each is said to presuppose and "supplement" the other in what appears to be a rather tangled hierarchy or heterarchy. He remarks, for example, that the syntactical structure of a language may be a "function" of pragmatic considerations; the very concepts of rule and of understanding are themselves pragmatic terms, since they refer to the manner of using signs; syntactics necessarily invokes semantics, and contrariwise; pragmatics must take into account the relations between signs and their correlations to "objects." Given these necessary interdependencies of the three topics, Morris concludes that "no one standpoint is adequate to the full nature of semiosis."

If we compare Metz's early semiology project to this division of topics, its strengths and limitations become more apparent. It is clear that the type of rule discussed at greatest length by Metz falls beneath the rubric of syntactics: the codes that he has proposed to analyse involve the relations between cinema signs, for example, relations manifested in the ordering of sequences, their linear disposition and permutations. His attention to the semantic dimension is less thorough: Metz has the merit of affirming that the referentiality of the cinematic image is not a matter of some ontological identification between image and "reality," but is on the contrary the product of a discursive formation. Yet at the same time he speaks here and there of the "natural analogy" between the conditions of perception in and outside the cinema; these statements are joined to others stressing the many levels of codification at work in the constitution of cinematic resemblance, a position that differs fundamentally from a belief in some "natural analogy."[27] In fact, Metz has not fully confronted the difficult issues related to the conditions of perception, yet this topic is crucial to his system insofar as he stipulates that it is precisely the representational propensity of cinema that permits films to be invaded by the "winds of culture" in the form of extra-cinematic codes.

The topic of pragmatics is where Metz's work reveals its greatest shortcomings, for little or nothing is said on the subject, although it is implicit in the very question that Metz places at the heart of film semiology, namely, the question of how spectators understand films. Metz would appear to have assumed, at this early stage in his theory, that the question of the spectator's use of film signs could be settled by answering the problems related to

syntactics, as if these rules were alone determinant of signification. Failing this, he makes a sudden and vague reference to "deep semantics" that will illuminate the essential paradigms of signification. This is an extremely misleading assumption which should be corrected in future research by a much greater emphasis on pragmatics. Why should this be so and what would such an emphasis entail ?

Semiology has taught us that every film is an extraordinarily complex system that can be analysed at any number of levels. To make a catalogue of the significant elements and patterns of a single feature-length film is an exhausting task, one that is endless because it can be re-begun constantly by changing the principle of pertinence guiding the analysis. Elements can be isolated and grouped according to diverse principles of clasification : I can, for example, construct one systematic description by focusing on the large sequences of the narrative, another by attending to the patterns of editing within sequences, others by isolating the patterns of the **mise en scène** (lighting, colours, décors, gestures, etc.), and so on quite endlessly. Nor do these different levels of description fall together automatically into a unified hierarchy or organised system ; the results of these different descriptions can be quite incompatible or simply unrelated in any apparent manner. It is the responsibility of the analyst to determine, then, the interest of any such operation, no matter how rigorously it is conducted. For as Wittgenstein suggests in his **Philosophical Investigations**, the possibility of an **accurate** segmentation of a discourse into smaller and smaller unities or patterns does not in itself guarantee the significance of the results.[28] Wittgenstein proposes that the interest of any such "discovery" of codes or patterns is ultimately only determined by its usefulness. Yet what is useful in the domain of film analysis ? One can conceive of any number of uses here, but usefulness should probably have to do with what we wish to know : for example, if we wish to know something about how the spectator understands a film, we must take care to see that the regularities analysed are in fact at work in some significant manner in conditioning the film's meaning for an audience. A correlary of this statement would be that if other conditions have more to do with an audience's reception of a film, then an elaborate description of syntactical codes, however accurate, would be far less pertinent, perhaps "irrelevant," and thus quite useless to the inquiry.

It is here that we find the import of the topic of pragmatics. Most generally, Morris describes the interpretants' use of signs as a "taking account" mediated by the sign. He goes on in his own behaviourist vein to describe this account-taking as a matter of needs and interests, as a sort of simple continuation of the biological functions of an organism's senses. Yet what sort of account-taking is at work in the making and receiving of films ? Clearly, Morris' stimulus-response model and his example of a dog reacting to the smoke that "stands for" fire will not help us here. Not that films are never warnings to an audience, in some sense ; the important point is that the uses of films are not simple continuations of biological needs or imperatives. Films may warn, but also serve to placate audiences and to forestall their worrying about a threat ; they may represent a danger only in order to rehearse a gratifying return to order and security. Films may invite the audience to play, or they may repeat, in a ritual or ceremonial form, a pre-established and instituted relationship of hierarchy. Films, we are often told, offer a "visual pleasure" to be enjoyed by the viewer, but what the film does not permit the viewer to see may sometimes be of greater pertinence to a pragmatic analysis. And quite paradoxically, the pleasure may take the form of a strong displeasure, for films frequently strive to evoke the emotions of fright and disgust. The "taking of accounts" may be a matter of information – a lesson learned, a moral drawn, atonement made – but we should also recall that the spectators' understanding may also involve a profound misunderstanding, that the lesson may be a delusion. Pragmatics, we should recall, involves not only the use of signs by a receiver but also their employ by a sender, and clearly the interests of the producers and directors belong within any comprehensive theory of the signification of cinema signs.

These remarks are meant to be suggestive of the array of significant questions raised by the topic of pragmatics. Two comments of a more systematic nature will be made here about this line of inquiry. First of all, it is important to note that pragmatics is often reduced to a mediated relation between the sign user and the "objects" of an external environment. The interpretant is said to "know" or "manipulate" the world by means of signs. Hence we witness lengthy discussions of the representational status and role of film images, and frequently analyses of ideology in film hinge entirely on this issue, as if ideology were equivalent to representation (as in the prevalent dogma that any film "shattering the representational illusion is a non-bourgeois film"). This tendency amounts to a folding back of pragmatics within semantics, and an alternative would be to place an equal if not greater emphasis on another dimension of pragmatics, namely, the various types of "account taking" that involve relations not between subjects and objects but mediated relations between subjects : interactions of exchange, conflict, desire, etc. It is difficult to imagine the existence of a film that is not fundamentally engaged in some relation of this order, a film that does not institute or explore a relation between subjects. That the agents involved in this relation may be absent from the text does not mean that these very relations have not inflected significantly even the finest details of the textual codification, and the task of analysis, which is admittedly difficult, would be to discover those agents and the relations in which the film is engaged. This may be the ground where film theory begins to find its usefulness, and we might subject any description of codes to the test of asking what it contributes to our understanding of the interactions set in motion by the film.

The second point about pragmatics concerns the relation of these rules to the other two types. If the topic of pragmatics is to have any pertinence at all, it is because these rules are not encompassed by the set of textual rules, both syntactical and semantic. We have seen that a textual film semiology is by no means autonomous in that the analysis of

film systems is necessarily led outside films to the networks and patterns of signification in culture. In one sense, this means that textual analysis must be much more extensive, that each film refers to another series of texts, that wherever the analysis of culture leads it will always be a matter of sign systems to be deciphered. Pragmatics, then, does not take us outside of signs to an external, objective, and stable "context" that limits the signification of the text in an unproblematical manner. Yet it is another proposition to assume, on the basis of this endless "intertextuality," that pragmatic rules are not of another order and type than the semantic and syntactical patterns.

A somewhat schematic example will be used to make this point more clear. In 1940, Viet Harlan directed for the Nazis a film entitled **Jud Süss**. Quite simply, this film portrays an 18th-century Stuttgart that is threatened by the monstrous schemes of an evil Jew; when this menacing figure is identified and put to death in a public execution, order returns to the city and the film ends. Now it seems safe to assume that the makers of this textual system sought to use the film to contribute to a certain perception of Jews and to the corresponding Nazi politics of genocide. It is also safe to assume that a significant part of the Nazi audiences of this film clearly understood and accepted this message: they were duly warned of the source of the danger and were made witness to the efficacity of the final solution, for the murder of the Jew brings a return to harmony. In other words, the members of the fascist audiences of this film did not respond in a thousand radically divergent ways but were on the contrary united by its message, just as the members of the fictional city are brought together in the end, finding unanimity in opposition to a common enemy. We should also note here that **Jud Süss** is not terribly singular as a film in that any number of others followed this major pattern of its narrative. We could thus speak accurately here of an invariant "code" that strongly determines the meaning of this film for a significant group of spectators, and of a code that remains significantly identical to itself through numerous messages. Now what is the provenance of this code? Clearly the pattern is not specific to the cinema: there were pogroms long before the invention of the cinema and social dramas of the same nature occurred far from the movie theatres in Nazi Germany and elsewhere. The code is, nonetheless, manifested in a specific manner by the textual system of **Jud Süss** and can be said to be immanent here, available to our analysis. Yet is this specific textual manifestation of the code the determinant condition of the invariant messages to which we have referred? That the syntactical and semantic formations of this film provide a set of necessary conditions for the reception of the unitary message is obvious (without the film we could not speak of **its** signification), but these rules do not, on the other hand, constitute sufficient conditions of the homogeneity of reception. For these textual codes are still "present" in the film when we view it today (that is, it is possible to recognise them), but it is hoped that significant parts of contemporary audiences would no longer receive the film in the same manner as the Nazi public. What makes the difference, then, between these receptions? The example is admittedly schematic, but it clearly points to the operation of a set of conditions of film signification that clearly falls outside the domain of the much-touted "close textual analysis" because the significant rules involve a pragmatic relation between groups, that is, the dynamics of social interaction. Obviously if we wish to analyse the determinations of anti-semitism in Nazi Germany we will have to read texts closely; a great number of texts, in fact. Yet we would not do so in an effort to analyse their specifically textual codifications but in an effort to understand the conditions of their pragmatic use. Only such considerations could tell us how this discourse could have one unified meaning for one audience and another, antithetical meaning for others. Such are the kinds of difficult questions that are raised when we take seriously the necessity of opening film semiology to the "thousand winds" of culture.[29]

Another issue is raised by this example: modern textual theorists have developed a remarkable sensitivity to the openness and indeterminancy of the fields of signification and hesitate to speak of a definitive or valid interpretation, preferring to assume that interpretation is an endless process and that all texts are inexhaustible. This sensitivity has its uses, but also its dangers. Are we willing to accept that the Nazi interpretation of **Jud Süss**, which is admittedly coherent, has the same status as an antithetical reading? If we say that the identification of the Jew as the source of all cultural disorder is a misrepresentation founded on the interests of a certain dominant group, is this interpretation no more valid than the other; namely, the "reading" that identifies the Jew as a supernatural source of evil that should rightfully be put to death by the community? The example signals the point of contact between the pragmatics of interpretation and the responsibility of the observer, and although the case is extreme, it can be generalised, for what is always at stake in the topic of pragmatics is the difficult problem of the ethics of interpretation.

I shall conclude this intervention with a paradox that runs throughout the history of film theory, this text, and the theory of signification "as a whole." Film theory must take as its most basic task the answering of the question posed by Bazin – what is the Cinema? Yet this very question carries with it assumptions that are both necessary and invalid. It implies, most fundamentally, that the cinema has a unitary identity and a determined essence. This assumption is necessary and correct insofar as the cinema **has** displayed significant invariants in its history, insofar as the significations of the cinema have been determined by certain regularities, that is, insofar as the making, distribution, and reception of films have followed instituted patterns that have been important enough for us to speak accurately of pertinent identities between films and between the conditions of their use. There have existed, then, conditions of the cinema that are the basis of potential answers to the question of "what cinema is." Yet this question is at the same time invalid and inappropriate to the extent that there is no possible delimitation of the signification of the cinema "as a whole," to the extent that the determinable significations of cinema send back and refer to the unending significations of the his-

tory and culture that incessantly invade – and in fact make possible – something called "cinema," insofar as there is no final law of signification, no totalising closure of its history. That the future of the cinema may not follow from its past, that the "essence" of film may display radical changes, means that there is no determined essence of films, no identity, no exact and conclusive answer to the question. Yet insofar as the cinema has been and continues to be determined, we must also continue to pose the question : what is cinema ?

McGill University

Notes

1/ For a representative anthology and bibliography, see Mast and Cohen, eds., **Film Theory and Criticism** (New York : Oxford, Univ. Press, 1974).

2/ Christian Metz, **Langage et cinéma** (Paris : Larousse, 1971), pp. 6-14.

3/ **Langage et cinéma,** pp. 16-44.

4/ **Langage et cinéma,** p. 186.

5/ **Langage et cinéma,** p. 178.

6/ Umberto Eco, "Articulations of the Cinematic Code," in **Movies and Methods,** ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley : Univ. of California Press, 1976), p. 592.

7/ **Langage et cinéma,** p. 63.

8/ Colin Cherry, **On Human Communication** (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1978), p. 8.

9/ **Langage et cinéma,** p. 64.

10/ **Langage et cinéma,** pp. 122-123.

11/ **Langage et cinéma,** pp. 76-77.

12/ Metz, **Essais sur la signification au cinéma** (Paris : Klincksieck, 1968), I, 64-65 ; the abominable English translation of this volume completely effaces the remark that specificity is "une notion-gigogne" and calls it instead a fundamental or indispensable concept.

13/ **Essais,** I, p. 211, n. 54.

14/ Émilio Garroni, **Semiotica ed estetica** (Bari : Laterza, 1968).

15/ **Langage et cinéma,** pp. 157-190.

16/ Here, briefly, are the lines of this discussion. Evoking Hjelmslev, Metz further divides the signifer/signified distinction in the following schema :

form substance matter

(sr) expression form of expression

matter of expression (specificity)

(sd) content form of content

matter of content (commonality)

"Form" is a purely relational network ; "matter" is the initially amorphous instance, having no propriety or essence, in which form is manifested ; "substance" is what appears when form is "projected" on matter "like the shadow appearing when a net is held before an uninterrupted surface."

Although Metz characterises the analogy of the net and its shadow as being "particularly clear," it is here that the additional distinctions and his notion of the material specificity of codes are most problematic. He claims that although codes are defined "exclusively as a relational logic," they may nonetheless be "linked" to specific matters of expression. Yet if the "matter" is amorphous and lacking specificity **(n'ayant pas de propre)**, and serves as a mere "support" of the net's shadow, then there is an extreme hierarchy in the form/matter relation, for the form is alone determinant of the "substance" that is the product of their "fusion". The analysis of the shadow would find nothing pertinent in the "uninterrupted surface" upon which the shadow falls ; the "matter" is an empty condition, except that it must be "organisable" by the form in any way. The question concerns, then, the relation between the two resultant "substances," that of expression and that of content. The substance of expression is, according to Metz, where languages or media have their distinct specificities. It is here that the cinema is different from novels, for example. At the level of the substance of content, the media are not necessarily different : meaning and its differentiations are identical to themselves across messages and media (and hence begin to resemble a "code"). Thus, the same meaning can be carried by a novel and a film if they both employ the same "schema of intelligibility" or if the motif depicted in a film and described in a novel carries the same meaning that it has in culture. The question is whether the specific substance of expression limits the range of such equivalences across media : are there some contents that only film can transmit, others that it cannot transmit at all ? Metz argues that there are, for certain relations between signifiers can only be manifested in the expressive "substance" of cinema. Yet what would these be ?

It is impossible to say, because no verbal expression can translate a specificity of cinema that by definition falls outside the definitions of signification that are possible in the verbal "substance of expression." It amounts to saying that there are certain shadowy nets that film can "project" but that no other media of expression share. Yet these specificities are not a matter of meanings, not a matter of pure schemas of relation, nor even a matter of the material nature of the cinema sign (which is only definable as a substance created by the contact of a form and an indefinite matter). It is a matter of an essential substance of the cinematic expression whose position in the above grid can be designated, but whose "content" cannot be spoken or written. Thus the relation between the two substances of expression and content is one of disjunction, for if the substance of expression determines the substance of content, then the cinema would have, by virtue of its substantial specificity, always a signification fundamentally different from other media. Yet Metz never claims this, which implies that the substance of content has a significant degree of autonomy from the particular substance of expression.

What becomes of the notion of code in this division ? Metz transports it here and there, "linking" the code to the substance of expression when he wants to affirm the "material" specificity of cinema, detaching it and carrying it over to the substance of content when he acknowledges the non-specificity of signification, its identity across languages and media. Yet clearly the notion of code, which merely redoubles the concept of system throughout Metz's texts, would pertain to the overall organisation of both expression and content. Yet there are two semi-autonomous systems here, that of expression and that of content.

What we have in this set of distinctions is either an elaborate manner of stating a banality (films are sounds and images projected on a screen, which is different from words printed on a page), or an incoherent ontology of signification in which are vaguely combined the principle terms of the most ancient Western metaphysics: substance **(ousia?)**, matter **(hyle, physis ?),** form **(eidos, morphe ?),** expression **(logos ?).** It amounts to a strange effort to remotivate the relata of signification by suggesting that the "matter" of the sign somewhat determines the form, when by definition matter is only a "support" in terms of form and signification. The substances of expression may indeed be specific, but again, this specificity is irrelevant in that it is detached from, and does not determine, the substance of content, that is, insofar as the code of film meaning is not established by the expressive substance of cinema.

17/ **Langage et cinéma,** p. 11.

18/ Aristotle, **Rhetoric,** 1354a-1358b, particularly 1358a-21.

19/ **Essais,** I, 142, cf. p. 67, n. 2, pp. 78-79, n. 2.

20/ **Rhetoric,** 1356b-11.

21/ Wilhelm Windelband, **Präludien** (Tübingen : Mohr, 1915), II, 144-45.

22/ Maurice Mandelbaum, **The Anatomy of Historical Knowledge** (Baltimore : The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), p. 157.

23/ Jean-François Lyotard, **La Condition postmoderne : rapport sur le savoir** (Paris : Minuit, 1979).

24/ **Condition postmoderne,** pp. 105-108.

25/ Edmund Husserl, **Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften une die transzendental Phänomenologie; Husserliana** (The Hague : Nijhoff, 1954), VI.

26/ Charles Morris, "Foundations of the Theory of Signs," in **International Encyclopedia of Unified Science** (Chicago : Univ. of Chicago Press, 1938), I :2, 77-13.

27/ **Essais,** I, 67-68, n. 2 ; 106, 113.

28/ **Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations,** trans. Anscombe (New York : Macmillan, 1953).

29/ The intuition that needs to be formulated here is that pragmatic rules and relations, although they are always mediated to an observer by signs and are hence discur-

sive, are not fully reducible to the level of semiosis. Yet the terms used to refer to this "other" level are in general inadequate. A prevalent usage, "signifying practice," is suggestive, but has not been linked consistently to any coherent grasp of pragmatics ; the word "praxis" is appropriate, yet misleading to the extent that it is traditionally placed in opposition to "theory," implying that practice is somehow empirical, unconstructed, or particular. René Girard adds the idea of a mimesis of appropriation and of desire to the traditional concept of a representational mimesis, a thesis that has the merit of maintaining the representational dimension while grounding it in social dynamics. The notions of production and poeisis may also be pertinent in emphasising the active pole of sign usage, particularly in the perspective of the theory of self-reproducing systems or institutions (Varela). Beneath such terminological considerations is the more fundamental issue of the theory of social interaction that underwrites every consideration of pragmatics : it is necessary to recognise that every theory of signification entails a sociology and a history. What also must be confronted is the problem of social causation, which however unwieldy, returns to haunt any problematic that pretends to ignore it, for whoever speaks of "conditions," "determinations," "necessary relations," and the like refers in one manner or another to causal series and consequences. The radical rejections of the very notion of cause (Hume, Russell, Nagel...) have not succeeded in banishing the issue from the sciences, exact or other. Stated fully, the guiding questions of film semiology are : What causes this type of film to be made and seen ? What causes the viewer to understand films ? What causes them to see films at all ? Following Castoriadis, the question would be to understand how signification is in fact determined – albeit always partially – when signification is potentially an unlimited and undeterminable series of referrings **(renvois)** from one sign or text to another following the polymorphous connexions of "standing for." He deems these referrings to be relations of a "facultative pseudo-equivalence." If the sign "a" refers, following various tropes, to the sign "b," and "b" refers in turn to "c," then "a" **can** refer to "c," just as if "a" refers to "b," "b" **can** refer to "a." The point is that these connexions of "unlimited semiosis," which can be developed infinitely once we begin to interpret a dream, a film or any text, are not necessary in the sense of a true mathematical equivalence, where symmetry, transitivity, and reflexivity are binding laws. Briefly, for Castoriadis, it is the social institution which binds the potential and facultative **renvois** of the sign-relation of "standing for" into exclusive and inclusive norms in the form of identity and stable differentiations. Yet what causes the determination of sign relations within institutions ? What causes institutions to be organised and dissolved ? See Cornelius Castoriadis, **L'Institution Imaginaire de la société** (Paris : Seuil, 1977).

The Photographic Image in Canadian Experimental Film

by Bruce Elder

Writing with a confidence arising from the authoritative position he held in 1962, the American art-critic Clement Greenberg asserted :

> By now it has been established, it would seem, that the irreducible essence of pictorial art consists in but two constitutive conventions or norms : flatness and delimitation of flatness ; and that the observance of merely these two norms is enough to create an object which can be experienced as a picture.[1]

At the very time when Greenberg was writing, events were occurring that would cast doubt on the adequacy of his critical theories. In New York, Andy Warhol had already begun to exhibit his serigraphs based on popular photographic imagery. In Toronto, Michael Snow (b. 1929) had abandoned purely abstract painting and was producing works that incorporated representational elements. And, in the small south-western Ontario city of London, Jack Chambers (1931-1978) was making paintings that revelled in the glory of the fully-detailed rendering made possible by copying photographs.

Clement Greenberg was the foremost exponent of the artistic theory known as modernism. Modernists claimed that the progress of art lay in the elimination from artistic media of everything that was accidental, so that only that which was essential would remain as the material with which an artist would work. Consequently, much of the experimentation that took place under the banner of modernism can be described succinctly : artists tried to make works that remained within the boundaries of the media in which they were realized (that is, to write novels or pieces of music that remained novels or pieces of music), even though they lacked certain traits (**e.g.** narrative line or tonic centre) that are commonly believed to characterize these media.

Nearly two decades have elapsed since our best artists employed their energies in the effort to realize these ideals. One can easily identify, in retrospect, certain exemplary products of this effort. There are, for instance, Malevich's white-on-white paintings. Among more recent works, one could cite the novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, which narrate the stories of their stories being narrated. And, at the source of the tradition, there are the works of Gustave Flaubert,[2] particularly the project he announced in 1878 that he intended to undertake after finishing **Bouvard et Pécuchet** – a novel that would be about nothing. Flaubert, unfortunately, was captured by Nothingness before he could succeed in catching nothing in the net of his fiction. Had he lived to carry out his idea, the art of the past century would likely have been quite different. As it is, his proposal has taken on the status of a legend, for it defined the **telos** of the artistic currents of the century after his death. In the last two decades many have come to realize, as Flaubert had indicated a hundred years before, that the process of reducing artwork to its essential elements was destined to culminate in a work that was about nothing at all.

Modernism's attraction was widespread ; indeed, among the arts, only photography seemed, by and large, reluctant to submit to its appeal. That photography should resist reformulation according to the modernist ideal is hardly surprising. Just try and imagine what a photograph would look like if it reached Flaubert's ideal of being a work about nothing. While one has no difficulty in imagining a painting that represents nothing, to conceive of a similar photograph seems impossible. It would be nothing more than an empty piece of paper or an empty screen.

Film, on the other hand, has not proven so resistant to modernist reformulation ; indeed, some of the finest examples of modernist art are to be found in the cinema. While no one has yet found a way of making an interesting film that would consist of nothing but projected white light, several American **avant-garde** filmmakers (**e.g.** Paul Sharits, Tony Conrad and Taka Iimura) have come pretty close, for they have created rich and intriguing works out of nothing except bursts of white or coloured light projected at regulated intervals for various periods of time.

There exists no similar body of work in photography. The reason that filmmakers have been able to come so much closer to Flaubert's 'zero-point' of artistic construction than have photographers is that film possesses one property still photographs lack, namely, the attribute of unfolding at a measured and regulated rate. The works I have just cited demonstrate that the essential

capacity of the film medium is its ability to articulate forms that provide temporal structures for changes in light. If the film medium is not embarrassed by the elimination of referential forms, it is not because a reserve of features that withstand the elimination of reference is inherent in its photographic basis, but, rather, because film possesses properties in addition to those that derive from its photographic basis.

The modernist movement in Canada produced no experimental cinema[3] whatsoever. The closest approximation one could find would be the works of Vincent Grenier, and even these were produced only after the filmmaker had lived in the United States for several years. Grenier's films typically employ forms that present the illusion of possessing processive areas and recessive areas ; this illusory depth generally appears quite shallow and extremely fragile. Moreover, his visual forms appear, for the most part, to be non-representational, although, in most of his films, a few brief passages disturb this appearance by revealing that these apparently abstract images are in fact direct recordings of real objects.

Grenier's main concern is to illustrate how slight changes in the tonal relations in a form affect our impression of the relations between the volumes in that form. However, I find more intriguing his treatment of the theoretical issues involved in the concept of representation. These issues are treated with particular clarity in Grenier's **World in Focus** (1977). The development of Grenier's thoughts on representation reflected in this film parallels the course of late modernist thought during the early-to-mid '60s. A prevalent notion in modernist circles during the 1940's and '50s was that the incorporation of representational images in a work of art degraded its ontological condition by downgrading it from an object to an image. Accordingly, early modernists eschewed representation entirely.

In the early 1960's, however, artists found a way to make representational works the ontological status of which was not, in relation to the original, a debased one. Jasper Johns, in his **Targets** series (1955-61) and **American Map** series (1960-63, 1965-66), pioneered the use of images that 'represented' other representational images. Such images avoid the problem of opening up the ontological gulf between image and original that plagues most representational practices, since an image of an image has much the same status and can serve many of the same functions as the original image itself. The images of maps in Grenier's **World in Focus** are a case in point. The image of a map can serve the same functions as the original map does, and is, in fact, a map. Thus, in this film Grenier found a way of using representational images in a fashion completely consistent with the modernist programme.

One of Michael Snow's favourite tactics accomplishes exactly the opposite of what Grenier achieved in **World in Focus**. He demonstrates how an image is transformed when it is made the subject of another medium. In **One Second in Montreal** (1969), for example, a series of still photographs is reproduced in a motion picture. A viewer reacts to these lengthy, motionless film images differently than he or she would to the equally protracted display of slides or still photographs. When watching these unchanging film images, one is conscious of the length of time during which they are presented in a way one would not be when looking at the stills. The difference points up the fact that temporality is inscribed in a film image. Duration is thus shown to be one of the filmmaker's fundamental materials, even more fundamental (**pace** such theorists as Siegfried Kracauer and Slavko Vorkapich) than motion, a trait of the film it makes possible. In a similar vein, **Side Seat Painting Slide Sound Film** (1970) shows that a photograph of a slide produces different effects than does the slide itself, and that a slide of a painting produces different effects than does the painting itself.

The simple strategies that Snow employs in these films raise an enormous theoretical challenge to the very basis of the modernist enterprise. Modernists had insisted upon the idea that every art faces the imperative of not losing its identity when it assimilates impulses, form or norms from the neighbouring arts. It has taken the purification of each medium as an urgent task and had attempted to find for each medium a form that would have a set of attributes entirely different from those of forms constructed for other media. Snow proposes a more relaxed attitude, suggesting that the task of preserving mediumistic purity is not quite as imposing as modernists took it to be, for, even when two arts use the same means, they produce different effects. Thus, in **One Second in Montreal** he shows that when aspects of still photographs are incorporated in film – indeed, when still photographs are incorporated 'holus-bolus' in a film – they acquire the durative properties of a filmic image.

Snow's **One Second in Montreal** provides a clue as to why Canadian **avant-garde** film is anti-modernist in conviction. Much Canadian cinema, both experimental and non-experimental, seems to rest on the assumption that film is a **photographically**-based medium. For this reason, Canadian cinema in all its forms has been preoccupied with that endeavour we find reflected in **One Second in Montreal :** the analysis of the nature of photograph, and, in particular, the attempt to comprehend the paradoxes inherent in that medium. It is the very intractability of the photographic image to conform to modernist reformulation that explains the dearth of modernist works in the corpus of Canadian **avant-garde** cinema. Conversely, the affinity of photography for post-modern practices explains the predominance within that corpus of post-modernist works. The reason for photography's affinity for post-moderism involves complex issues, but one point of contact between photography and post-modernism can easily be described : by and large, both are concerned with issues that arise from the use of representation, and, especially, with the values, both aesthetic and cognitive, of a representational image. Even the paradoxes to which post-modern works return with such regularity are paradoxes inherent in the concept of representation.

The nature of these paradoxes can be clarified by considering two examples : Jack Chambers' 1968-69 oil, **401 Towards London No. 7** and an individual image from a photographic series by Snow entitled **Plus Tard** (1977). The former is a painting from what is evidently a snapshot, **i.e.,** a casually produced photograph of an everyday event ;

the latter is what seems to be a casually produced photograph of Tom Thomson's **The Jack Pine** (1916-17),[4] a painting well-known to Canadians as a pioneering example of 'documentary landscape painting', a type of painting many critics believe to be quintessentially Canadian.

The responses these works evoke run an interesting course. When looking at either of them, we imagine the image that the work represents : the photograph from which Chambers painted, and the painting Snow photographed. Such representations, then, induce a desire to see the original. We can imagine, though, that if the original were to be presented, we would then want to see the scene that **it** represented. Yet we know, in spite of that desire, that if we were to be shown the scene which the original represents, the curiosity and fascination aroused by the work of art would not be satisfied.

If the presentation of its original model cannot sate the curiosity aroused by a work of art, it would seem that this curiosity must be directed not toward that which is represented, but rather toward something intrinsic in the representational image itself. This was the conclusion drawn by modernist theorists. Consequently, they expended much effort on identifying the properties intrinsic in the work itself that might sustain such interest and curiosity. Some argued that it was because artworks possessed 'significant form' that they fascinate us ; others claimed that it was because the artwork bore evidence that a human personality had shaped it.

More recent artistic practices have tended to refute these claims. Neither Snow's 'casual' photograph of a finished artwork, nor Chambers' careful painting derived from a casual photograph, possesses what would canonically be considered as a 'significant form' ; in fact, if either were to be contemplated in exclusively formal terms, each would be found lacking. Moreover, the meticulous objectivity of Chambers' reproduction of his source photograph is calculated precisely to exclude the formative – or, as he considers it, the deforming – role of the human personality.[5]

What underlies the effects we have described, according to post-modernists, is not something intrinsic in the work of art itself ; it relates, rather, to something intrinsic in the phenomenon of representation.[6] Quite simply, post-modernists contend that the special interest evoked by a representational image results from the fact that it presents the appearance of an object other than itself. Although this claim sounds almost tautologically trivial, it asserts an absolutely fundamental proposition. I choose the word 'appearance' with great care, for it embodies an ambiguity essential to the phenomenon of representation. The word 'appearance' can refer either to someone or something actually present (as when we talk of a celebrity's 'appearance' at some gathering), or to an illusory presence (as when we speak of a pool of water in a desert as being only an 'appearance').

The concept of representation is similarly double-edged. A representation is at once an actual object and an illusion, an image that seems to present an object not actually present.[7] A representational image, then, is a fascinating matrix of presence and absence. In fact, only when the absence of the represented object is actually acknowledged does representation occur. It is the double-sided nature of the concept of representation – the fact that the presence of the original is suggested by an artistic representation even while its absence is demanded – that explains the peculiar course of desire a representation evokes. This desire projects itself towards the 'Other' the image represents. It is this that makes the desire one that is impossible to sate. The 'Other' cannot retain its 'Otherness' when it is actually present.[8] Inherent in the very concept of 'Otherness' is the idea of absence.

As the relationship of pictorial space to the picture plane was, for modernism, a fundamental relationship in an artwork, the relationship between presence and absence has been taken as the controlling feature of an artwork in post-modernism. This explains the particular interest post-modernists have taken in photography. The relationship between presence and absence in a photograph is a particularly intense one, since a photograph offers an unusually forceful illusion of the 'Other' it represents. Indeed, it offers that illusion with such a force that the Other's absence becomes something of a Presence. This paradox of photography has been remarked upon by Roland Barthes, who speaks of "the real unreality" of the photograph and states that, in a photograph, one discovers "a new category of space-time that involves an illogical conjunction of the here-now and the there-then."[9]

The advocates of modernism had forsworn any truck with an artwork's Other. They insisted that an artwork must have a solid being, that it must be wholly itself, with no part constituted by something separate from itself. This co-incidence of a work with its own being was to be gauged in two distinct though interrelated ways. One gauge was the degree of referentiality of the work. Illusionistic features were alleged to throw a work out of aligment with its being, since they forced the work to surrender aspects of its internal structure to that which it represented. Another gauge was the degree of its conformity to the medium in which it was realized : to be fully aligned with its being, a painting must be wholly a painting and must not possess features from some other medium.

Modernism, in sum, was a centripetal doctrine : it turned the artwork in upon itself. Post-modernism, on the other hand, is a centrifugal doctrine : its techniques are techniques of 'decentering', of dispersal. The proponents of post-modernism have proposed, for example, the dissolution of notions of mediumistic purity and instead have advocated the construction of forms that employ attributes of one medium in works realized in a different medium.

The temporal structures of Michael Snow's films are a case in point. Most of them have very simple shapes which extend over protracted durations. Snow pioneered the use of such forms ; indeed, when he first developed them, they provoked something of an uproar because they were so very unusual. During the early and mid-sixties, **avant-garde** cinema was dominated by forms developed by the American filmmaker Stan Brakhage. Brakhage's films typically employ intense, expressionistic camera-movements, frequent use of extremely close camera-positions, rapid cutting be-

tween shots with contrasting attributes, and complex rhythmic structures created by the conjoint effects of cutting and camera-movement. The style forged from these devices tends to rivet the spectator's attention to the screen. Brakhage's works are so rapidly paced and have such intensity that one is required to give one's entire attention to the task of grasping what occurs in the very instant of its happening. Hence, one's mental energy is devoted wholly to the perception of what is immediately present; there is none left over for the apperceptual acts of recollection or anticipation. The spectator of a Brakhage film is a fascinated spectator, absorbed completely in the given moment; he occupies a realm without any temporal extension, for in it everything exists in a timeless present.

The temporal forms of Brakhage's films were designed to consolidate the viewer's experience, for they act to assure that only what is present in time is present to consciousness; they assure that what is given is totally present, **i.e.** totally revealed. Snow's temporal structures, on the other hand, involve a strategy of dispersal. By using a form that unfolds over an extended period in a nearly predictable manner, Snow encourages his viewer to recall the course the film followed to reach a certain point, and to speculate on its future course. These structures, then, lead one out of the confines of the present into the past and the future, away from what is actually given towards that which is furnished only by reflexive acts of consciousness: away, in short, from presence toward absence. In this respect, they resemble representations.

The temporal forms of Snow's films also relate to features specific to photographic representation. A photographic representation,[10] unlike representations in many other forms (**e.g.** paintings, drawings, poetry, fiction), cannot depict objects or events that have never actually existed. The distinction between forms of representation that are constrained to depict or record actual existents and those that are not so constrained is an important one in mimetic theory. It was first introduced by Aristotle, who noted, amongst other features, that the former sort of imitation stands to the latter as history stands to poetry.

Aristotle's comment is startlingly apposite to a characterization of the contrasting temporal structures of the films of Brakhage and Snow: Brakhage's works are poetic constructs and Snow's historical constructs. The temporality of Brakhage's cinema figures in his endeavour to make of his films a form of poetry. The fascinated absorption in the timeless present which he seeks to evoke suggests his poetic commitment to the supreme ecstasy of imaginative creation. Snow, on the other hand, uses a continuous period of time in order to scrutinize the way in which an experience evolves. The study of how events evolve in time is a study that can properly be termed historical.

If the extended durations of Snow's films make the viewer aware of the passage of time, another aspect of their structure acts to counterbalance this. Many of Snow's films have diagrammatic shapes, the conical shape of **Wavelength** (1967), based on the gradual narrowing of the zoom, being the prime example. Such shapes allow one to grasp the films' lines of development as wholes and to conceive of them in what are, in essence, atemporal, spacial terms.

There is a similar tension between the temporal features that characterize a photograph. A photograph, too, seems to depict the unfolding of an event in time even while it lifts those events outside time. So strongly do these conflicting qualities assert themselves that each has provided the basis of a separate tradition of photography. One approach, as exemplified by the works of Robert Frank, exploits the photograph's ability to depict the speed of unfolding events; the other, represented by Edward Weston, exploits the photograph's capacity to freeze a form and render it timeless. Snow's brilliant insight was to see how these two competing qualities of a photographic temporality could be reconciled by giving a photographically-based work a temporally-extended form with a diagrammatic shape.

Snow's works involve still another type of dispersal, in that he allows them to cross the boundaries separating different media. As we have seen, he sometimes does this by re-using imagery created in one medium in a work realized in a different medium – as, for example, he incorporated still photographs in his **One Second in Montreal**. He also does this by incorporating features of one medium in forms constructed in another – introducing, for instance, characteristics of sculpture in a film. A fine instance of this is ⟷ (1968-69), which was produced by stationing a camera in front of a classroom wall, and, first, panning it back and forth, then tilting it up and down. Because the camera is positioned non-equidistantly from the two ends of the wall, the pan contains a slight asymmetry; the wall seems to swing one distance toward the camera, then a different distance away. The effect is that the space in front of the wall seems to expand and contract while the wall itself undulates aperiodically toward and away from the image's picture-plan. As the panning decelerates and accelerates, these spatial variations are re-inforced; rapid panning streaks and blurs the image, flattening it further, while a more leisurely pace restores the illusion of deep space. Thus, ironically, a back-and-forth movement almost parallel to the picture-plane results in an apparent movement toward and from the picture-surface.

As the title suggests, the film balances opposites: an optical (two-dimensional) space is balanced by a haptic (illusory three-dimensional) space; self-referential constructs are balanced by illusionistic constructs; abstract passages are balanced by narrative episodes. The film literally oscillates between poles of cinematic construction. It uses a monomorphic shape that is based on a single operation, panning, to demonstrate that these poles are joined in a continuum of possibilities for film construction. Since all the possibilities can be realized by varying a single facet of this operation – its rate – there must be something common to them all. Even the poles, the extreme ends of the continuum, must share in this common nature. Thus, Show demonstrates, these two poles of cinematic construction cannot be the simple opposites modernists took them to be. The monomorphic forms of Snow's films act to reconcile diversity by demonstrating that seemingly opposite forms of con-

struction have something in common.

Along with other artists formulating that art which is now commonly referred to as post-modern, Snow's work involves a repudiation of the modernist ideals of 'purity' and 'essentiality'. In essence, his strategies and forms are based on the principle of non-exclusion. He has insisted on using both representation and abstraction and on employing both illusionistic devices and devices which emphasize the 'objecthood' of a work of art. Snow, it might be recalled, entitled another of his pieces **Two Sides to Every Story** (1974). The catholicity implied by the title is a key feature of his vision. While modernist art was based on principles whose effect was to exclude certain characteristics from painting or sculpture, Snow has laboured to reinstate those features into each of the several media with which he has worked, using them to balance those features which modernist art admits.

●

Like Michael Snow, Jack Chambers is well-known as a painter. Many of his paintings depict features of his immediate situation: his family, friends, places in the city where he lived, and the landscape of south-western Ontario. He was evidently deeply in love with his local environment and strongly committed to the ideal of depicting it.

This was not always so. In the late fifties he had left Canada, somewhat disgusted at what he perceived as its anti-artistic attitudes. He studied painting in Spain – significantly, because he felt that there he could receive the best training in traditional techniques, – and worked in the country briefly after graduation. Before long, however, he felt the urge to return to London. As he explained to an interviewer:

> The Castillian landscape was always something impenetrable for me. It was something I desired to become by entering but never could or did... There was an organism within an organism that appeared as landscape. But I knew I was not inside.[11]

The beauty of the experience of the unity of self with nature recurs throughout Chambers' writing and painting, and underlies his use of the photograph. Chambers is a Romantic artist and his commitment to making realistic paintings depicting scenes from his immediate surroundings relates to his Romantic ideals. These images have an ambiguous existence. Since their contents are rendered with such meticulous objectivity, they seem to depict things in the material world; since their subjects are rendered with such intimacy, they seem to represent Chambers' inner world. Their contents thus appear to be both subjective and objective. In fact, they seem to exist at that point where self and world meet.

Chambers values photography highly because a photograph is a paradigm of this sort of amalgam of subjectivity and objectivity. A photograph is a product of a machine, since, in an important sense, the presence of a consciousness is only accidental to the making of a photograph, and since its nature is mechanically and scientifically determined.

Paradoxically, though, a photograph conveys, perhaps more forcefully than any other medium, the presence of a consciousness. A photograph always suggests a viewing subject: that is why 'the look' of a photograph and 'the eye' of the photographer have, of late, become so celebrated. This paradox – that the more objective a description becomes, the more subjective it seems to be – underlies much of Chambers' work. Subtending his philosophy is the Romantic conception that both a perception and a work of art are products of the same creative force in nature. His commitment to objective painting ("perceptual realism" he labelled his style) was founded on his dedication to the task of giving himself over to this creative urge. In his films Chambers relies, as would be expected, on the natural, scientifically-based likeness between a photograph and the object or scene it depicts in order to convey the idea that his films represent objective reality. On the other hand, to convey the idea that they represent the contents of his inner world, Chambers resorted to several somewhat unusual devices. For example, in **Hart of London** (1970), Chambers used a special printing technique known as **bas relief** to eliminate details from large areas of the image, leaving only the outlines of predominant shapes visible. This makes the imagery resemble the contents of memory. As well, in such films as **Hart of London** and **Mosaic** (1966), Chambers employed high levels of exposure and negative-for-positive reversal, which make the imagery appear to be suffused with an intense light. This brilliance acts partly to reduce the image to its predominant elements and partly to suggest an analogy to thought. In **Hart of London** he also made use of multiple images which seem detached from any real space, as if in order to represent simultaneously occuring thoughts.

Chambers believed that the properties of the photographic image made the photograph a useful tool in conducting phenomenological investigation. This belief he shared with Stan Brakhage. It is hardly surprising, then, that Brakhage should be drawn to Chambers' work. Brakhage, in fact, has done great service in the cause of bringing Chambers' films out of obscurity. In his campaign to get them exhibited, Brakhage has brought them to the attention of curators and film programmers, has spoken to audiences about them, and has written notes on them. In the programme-notes he prepared for the 1978 San Francisco Cinemathèque, Brakhage wrote:

> The fact is that the four films[12] of Jack Chambers have changed the whole history of film, despite their neglect, in a way that isn't even possible within the field of painting. There are no 'masters' of film in any significant sense whatsoever. There are only 'makers' in the original, or at least medieval, sense of the word. Jack Chambers is a true maker of film.[13]

Jack Chambers' films, like Michael Snow's, deal with issues arising from the nature of photographic representation. There are, of course, clear differences between the films of these two artists. While Chambers continues to use the metaphoric figurations that were so important in Brakhage's "film-poems," Snow in large measure rejects such tropes: indeed, one of

Snow's favourite strategies is to develop a structure that literalizes a commonplace metaphor. Furthermore, Snow's deep interest in framing has led him to give metonymic devices preference to metaphoric ones. But in spite of these differences, both artists share a concern with photographic imagery which was quite uncommon in **avant-garde** cinema at the time they began to make films. Probably this reflects a deep-rooted interest among Canadian artists in the activity of documentation. Whatever the source of this interest may be, it helped them to reshape experimental filmmaking by stimulating the advance from modern to post-modern forms, and gave them an important place in the history of **avant-garde** cinema.

My own work, too, is largely composed on an optical printer and, like Razutis, I have garnered something of a reputation as a master craftsman with the instrument. And, like several other Canadian avant-garde filmmakers (including Lugg, Gruben and Razutis), I have frequently incorporated written texts into the films' imagery in order to explore the differences in the responses one makes to verbal and to visual imagery. But, in my view, the most important aspect of my work lies in the use of a form of construction in which several lines of development occur simultaneously, creating a tension between reading and looking, between listening to speech, to music and to sound effects. The purpose of this form of construction is to create a viewer/listener who is self-conflicted inasmuch as he is required to engage in mutually incompatible processes. The point at issue here is the concept of the individual who is completely self-contained and wholly harmonious in all his parts. Since this is the concept of the individual that is involved in liberal thought, this form of construction has political implications. I fully expect political issues to come more and more to the fore in the work of the new avant-garde.

This text was originally part of the catalogue to the O Kanada exhibition held in Berlin in December, 1982. It is reprinted courtesy The Canada Council.

Notes

1/ Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism" **Art International,** 6 (October, 1962), p. 30.

2/ It was the great American **avant-garde** filmmaker, Hollis Frampton, who, citing how central Flaubert's project was to the modernist ambition, first indicated the incompatibility between it and the nature of photography. See Hollis Frampton, "Impromptus on Edward Weston," in **October**, 5 (Summer, 1978), p. 53.

3/ That is, live-action cinema. In animated film (which I consider a completely different medium, since its photographic properties are quite accidental to it, in the sense that any method of duplicating images for subsequent rapid projection would be suitable), we have the spendid work of Norman McLaren. I consider it a confirmation of my thesis that the major modernist 'film' works produced by a Canadian artist were made in a non-photographically-based medium.

4/ This appearance of being casually produced is created by its slightly soft focus and by the inclusion in the frame of the sort of reflections of people and the surroundings which, typically, appear inadvertently when one makes a rapid snapshot of a work of art hanging in a gallery. The appearance is deceptive; Snow uses these apparently accidental features to reveal the environment in which the painting he photographed was hanging.

5/ See Jack Chambers, "Perceptual Realism," **artscanada,** 26, No. 5 (October, 1969), p. 8.

6/ Or, more technically: the special effects of representation depend upon relational rather than absolute properties. The error the modernists made was to assume that the special properties of representation must be absolute properties. It was this assumption that underlay their notions about the autonomy of the work of art.

7/ The magical thinking characteristic of pre-artistic representation equated both forms of presence, **i.e.,** the illusion represented was taken as having the same reality as the representing token. Artistic representation depends upon separating these two forms of presence. To express the point more technically, I argue that artistic representation occurs only when a consciousness of the nature of symbolism replaces the effects of magical thinking in one's psychology.

8/ Or, taken as being so, as in magical thinking.

9/ Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," in **Image-Music-Text**. Essays selected and translated by Stephen Heath (Grasguo: Fontana, 1977), p. 44.

10/ Or, in the case of photo-montages or photo-composites, the individual components of the image.

11/ Ross C. Woodman, **Chambers** (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1967), p. 8.

12/ Brakhage is mistaken in believing that Chambers made only four films; in fact, the finished six and left two nearly completed but unprinted at his death. Of his films, however, only **Mosaic, Hybrid, Circle** and **Hart of London** are known by more than a very few.

13/ Stan Brakhage, letter to San Francisco Art Institute Cinémathèque, quoted in Cinémathèque's brochure, June-July, 1978.

FILMOGRAPHIES

Michael Snow (1929-)

A—Z
(7 min.) 1956

New York Eye and Ear Control
(34 min.) 1964

Wavelength
(45 min.) 1967

Standard Time
(8 min.) 1967

One Second in Montreal
(8 min.) 1967

←——→
(50 min.) 1969

Side Seat Paintings Slide Sound Film
(20 min.) 1970

La Région Centrale
(3 hrs.) 1971

Rameau's Nephew by Diderot (Thanx to Dennis Young) By Wilma Shoen
(4 hrs. 3 min.) 1974

Breakfast
(15 min.) 1972/76

'Presents'
(94 min.) 1981

Jack Chambers (1931-1978)

Mosaic
(approx. 20 min.) 1966

Little Red Riding Hood
(approx. 15 min.) 1966

Hybrid
(approx 20 min.) 1967

R34
(approx. 20 min.) 1967

Circle
(35 min.) 1968

The Hart of London
(80 min.) 1970

Life Still
(approx. 30 min.) in progress 1970-71
(unfinished?)

C.C.C.I.
(approx. 30 min.) in progress 1969-71
(unfinished)

(Note: Except for **Circle** and **Hart of London**, Chambers' films are unavailable through distribution channels. Runnings are unavailable.)

Vincent Grenier

La brosse, la guenille, et le seau d'eau
(The Brush, the Rag and the Water Bucket)
(nd)

Jaune
(Yellow)
(nd)

Bumps
(nd)

The Flights of Alexander Maximiliam Tumont Senat Ohm Oliver
(nd)

Window Wind Chimes Part One
1974

Catch
1975

Light Shaft
1975

Shade
1975

World in Focus
1976

While Revolved
1976

X
1976

Interieur Interiors (to A.K.)
1978

Close Outside
1979/81

Bruce Elder (1947-)

Breath / Light / Birth
(8 min.) 1975

She is Away
13 1/2 min.) 1975

Barbara is a Vision of Loveliness
(6 min.) 1976

Permutations and Cominations
(8 min.) 1976

Unremitting Tenderness
(8 min.) 1977

Look: We have come through
(13 min.) 1978

The Art of Worldly Wisdom
(55 min.) 1979

Sweet Love Remembered
14 min. 20 sec.) 1980

1857 (Fool's Gold)
(22 min.) 1981

Illuminated Texts
(2 1/2 hrs.) 1982

notes